







HOMILETICAL AND PASTORAL  
LECTURES.

PHOTOGRAPHIC AND PASTORAL

LECTURES



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HOMILETICAL AND PASTORAL  
~~L. S. Thackeray, etc.~~  
LECTURES.

Wm. J. Hutchins  
August 1907

Delivered in St. Paul's Cathedral before the  
Church Homiletical Society.

WITH A PREFACE BY THE RIGHT REV.

C. J. ELLICOTT, D.D.

Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE following Lectures were delivered, at various periods during the past five years, before the Church Homiletical Society, either in the Chapter Room or the Trophy Room of St. Paul's Cathedral.

The useful Society, before the members of which the lectures were delivered, was established in March 1874, and owed its origin to a small gathering of London clergymen, who met together in the autumn of the preceding year to consider the best means of raising the standard of preaching, especially among younger men. It was felt that the need for such a movement was real, and even urgent, but it appeared to be very doubtful how that need could best be supplied. It was ultimately agreed that a short and tentative course of lectures on preaching should be delivered. Invitations were sent out to all the clergy of London and the suburbs, and to others



interested in the subject; the invitations were so largely accepted, and the opening lectures so distinctly successful, that a permanent Society was formed in March 1875, and, shortly afterwards, a periodical called the *Clergyman's Magazine* published as the organ of the Society.

It is from the pages of this magazine that the following lectures have been chosen, under the belief that their publication, especially in the sequence in which they appear in this volume, will be useful not only to younger men, but to all who are interested in the advance of Practical Homiletical Theology. The lectures are arranged and grouped, not in the chronological order of their delivery, but as they bear upon the clergyman, in his pulpit, his study, his parish, and in the general exercise of his ministry; and are designed to place before the student, in a simple but instructive form, what may be termed the Principles of the most tested Homiletical Teaching. The well-known and distinguished names of the lecturers will at once prepare the reader for finding, what he certainly will find in this volume, a setting forth of those principles with clearness and cogency. The golden thread that runs through them all is elevated instruction, combined with that clear com-



mon sense and knowledge of the human heart which are both so vitally necessary in any true and effective teaching of Homiletics.

Such a teaching, it is believed, is best communicated by the co-operation of several different minds; and for this plain reason, that hardly any single mind is sufficiently many-sided to set forth the various aspects of the answers to the great questions,—How most effectually to influence the souls of others by the spoken Word, and how most permanently to modify life and practice. All experience shows that to combine successfully and attractively the humbler but yet most necessary teaching that dwells upon the form in which the message is to be conveyed, and higher teaching which bears upon the inner nature and characteristics of the message, is a work which one mind can hardly ever adequately perform. It is, therefore, in a subject like the present, of no little advantage to the student that he will have here presented to him the convictions of independent minds; and, it may be rightly added, of minds that have been matured by long experience in that blessed but difficult art which they are here seeking to impart to others.

It is thus hoped and believed that this volume

will prove to be of great and permanent use to all who are interested in the vital question of bringing the message of the Gospel vitally home to the hearts of those committed to their charge. It has been said of late—whether rightly or wrongly it may be hard to decide—that there is a want of preaching power in the general body of our clergy; and it has been contended that, to a great degree, this may be attributed to our total neglect of training young men designed for the ministry in the difficult art of persuasion. There may be much truth in this; but it is ever perilous to the spontaneity of a young and earnest soul, that truly loves Christ crucified, to press upon it the mere formal rules, however frequently verified, of an outward rhetoric, unless it be with the constant and reverent recognition of the holy purpose which the poor rules are designed to subserve. This subtle danger, it will be found, is recognised and avoided in these Lectures. The rules will be found always to be based upon the higher purpose, and will further commend themselves to the student as bearing the evident tokens of having emerged, in the case of most of the lecturers, from a long and sympathetic experience. The tone of the whole is just that which is most calculated to teach most

effectively,—practical, and reverent: practical in the advice given, and in the mode of urging it upon the student; and reverent in its perpetual recognition of the great end, aim, and purpose, of all Christian preaching.

And this, at a time such as the present, is of great moment. In the effort to make the sermon attractive, the true elevated conception of the sermon is now often utterly lost. The passing incidents of the day, wisely perhaps and soberly estimated, only too often form the substratum of the modern discourse. The text is but the appended motto, illustrated by the topic rather than enunciative of the higher principle on which the topic is to be treated. All is popular, attractive, sensible, and seasonable,—but nothing more. The breath of the Inspired Word, quickening the mere moral comments into Scriptural life, is wanting; what we hear is but what we might have read elsewhere on the pages of a meditative essay; what we derive is but what we might have drawn from the communications of a sensible speaker. What we seek for, but find not, is that vital message which the soul welcomes when it hears it, because it feels and knows that that message flows forth from the deep fountains of an inward life, and from con-

victions which are fruits and manifestations of the indwelling Spirit of God.

This higher view of the sermon has never been lost sight of in these pages. The sermon is throughout regarded as the message and the proclamation; and though the form and manner of the message is rightly dwelt upon with every variety of illustration, the subject-matter, it will be found, is ever that which receives the greatest and most continued attention.

More need not be said. The reader is now referred to the volume itself, in which all that has been here said will be found to be fully substantiated. They who have written in this volume have had only one mind and one purpose—to help, to a fuller power of preaching Christ crucified, all those to whom is entrusted the ministry of reconciliation. This has been the mind and the purpose of these Homiletical and Pastoral Lectures. On this purpose, and on the manner in which the purpose is here carried out, may God the Holy Ghost vouchsafe to have sent down His helping and awakening blessing.

C. J. GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL.

GLOUCESTER,

*October 25th, 1879.*



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# The Preparation of a Sermon.

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND ANTHONY W. THOROLD, D.D.,  
LORD BISHOP OF ROCHESTER.





## I.

### *THE PREPARATION OF A SERMON.*

WHAT is a sermon? Perhaps as complex a production as anything you can well name. It may be defined as the truth of God filtered through the lips of man; yet this is but a single glimpse of a many-sided whole. Thought and words, voice and look, repose and action, the spoils of the dead, and the research of the living, the thinker's reasoning, and the sufferer's pathos; yesterday's burdens, that sent you to your knees for personal consolation; to-morrow's cares, which only your own faith in God can help you calmly and bravely to meet; the totality of your previous life colouring and impregnating your present consciousness; the ever-changing lights and shades that flit across a man's spirit in a week of actual life. What the man is, the sermon will be; but the man is what his previous life has made him. If the subjective element in the sermon too much dominates over the objective, the preacher will run the risk of not preaching Christ Jesus the Lord, but himself; while if the objective element

chills or crushes the subjective, then it is no longer a man speaking to his fellows, one of like passions with them, but either a sort of patent preaching machine coldly emitting its regular but metallic utterances, or a kind of self-made hierarch haranguing as from an upper world mortals with whom he has little in common.

In the preparation of a sermon, from the first rough casting of it in the preacher's mind to the moment when he stands up in the congregation to deliver it in God's name, there are various steps or stages, some of which, as experience matures, may be judiciously compressed, or even safely omitted, but which a young preacher in the early years of his apprenticeship would be most imprudent to neglect.

Their proper order, in perhaps their exact completeness, is as follows:—

The choice of the subject and the text.

The first rough casting of the general outline, to be followed by a careful and elaborate analysis.

The gathering of materials.

The fermentation of the subject in the preacher's mind.

The composition of the sermon.

The criticism of it, and, where necessary, the altering, adding to, or recasting of it.

The final preparation for the pulpit, in the private recitation of the sermon, in the devout prepa-

ration of the spirit and heart for delivering it, and in the solemn commending of it to God.

I. The first two points to settle about a sermon are these: what it is you want to say, and how you mean to say it. Much precious time is often lost by hopelessly drifting about in search of a subject at the last moment; and a good way of preventing this is to take advantage of leisure, when the mind is fertile in suggesting subjects, or the judgment felicitous in selecting texts, for writing them down in a book for the purpose, to be referred to as they are wanted. A clergyman known to me often has his subjects and texts ready for six months in advance; and though unforeseen circumstances will occasionally modify our plans, it is far less trouble to change them, if necessary, for something else more immediately suitable, than perhaps in a fagged or exhausted moment to be blindly hunting about for a good subject, at the double risk of destroying the symmetry of our previous teaching, and of our choosing some subject in a hurry, not because it is the best we can find, but from sheer despair of a better. When you know what you want to say, the next thing to settle is, how to say it. There are two methods of preaching: one the expository, the other the textual; and while the former has the immense advantage of compelling the continuous study of a large portion of the Bible, the latter perhaps finds most favour with preachers,

as tending more to narrow the focus, condense the matter, compel the analysis, and concentrate the force of the sermon. About your text let me press these few cautions: Never use the Word of God as a mere motto. Be quite sure that the text really means what you suppose it to mean; and to ascertain this, carefully examine it in the original. As soon as you have written it at the beginning of your sermon, don't run away from it as fast as you can, as if it had frightened you. Let the object of your sermon be to bring God's mind out of your text, to show to your people, rather than to bring your own mind to it, to display yourself. On the happy choice of a text, more depends than we suppose, both for the quality of a sermon and the attention of the people. Begin well, and you are half-way to the end.

II. The subject chosen, and the text found for it, the next point for consideration is to shape into some rough outline the ideas that may be supposed to be teeming in the preacher's brain, impatient for a speedy birth. Quite the first thing clearly and inflexibly to settle is the main or central thought which is to regulate, point, colour, and control the whole; to be the light of the body, in at once expounding and illuminating the substance that composes it; the direct line between a fixed point of departure and another of arrival, on which, as straight as may be, through the spacious tracts of



Christian theology, the journey of the preacher is to lie. If the true art of a sermon is to make it the natural, easy, and complete development of but one idea, then the best result of a sermon is that that one idea should be so persistently and ingeniously and attractively beaten into the mind of the hearers, that every one comes away perfectly clear as to what the preacher wanted to say, and how far he succeeded in saying it. A young preacher, who can hardly take too much pains in his first efforts at sermon-writing, will do well, for at least a year or two, to make two analyses before he sits down finally to write. The first need only be very brief and rough, on a slate or piece of waste paper, with the main thought of his sermon written at the top of the page in a large clear hand. He will thus keep distinctly before him the subject he has to think out, and the place to which he is travelling. Beneath this let him put down in half a dozen lines any thoughts that occur to him, just as they occur; and if at this first period of incubation he can succeed in jotting down something with which to begin his sermon, and a word, say, of application for the end, he will have fairly broken ground and seen daylight. Then, say the next day, the fuller analysis should follow. An architect has no doubt done something when he has secured his site, chosen his aspect, settled on



the dimensions of the house, and dug his foundations ; but even before he collects his materials, or prepares his estimates, he feels it prudent to settle on the number and size of the rooms, the passages that lead to them, the windows that let in the light, the doors that admit the inmates. Thus, this first skeleton, sufficient as it will be and ought to be for preachers of experience, must by no means be treated as a sufficient ground-plan for beginners. A book should be kept solely for the fuller analyses, numbered and indexed at the end, with text and subject for convenient reference ; and here the sketch already made should be carefully and fully developed. On the mooted point of the divisions of a sermon it is not possible to linger. Great authorities differ here, as widely as they are occasionally known to differ elsewhere ; and Fénelon, as some will remember, is very strong against them, observing of them that “sometimes they are not natural ; that they make the sermon dry and wearisome ; that there is no more any real unity, but two or three different discourses linked together by a mere arbitrary connexion ; ancient orators did not adopt them ; the fathers knew nothing of them ; and that they are a modern invention derived from the schoolmen.” It is unwise, however, to try to fetter individual discretion by any universal or arbitrary rules. The quality of a man’s own mind ;

the nature of the congregation to which he ministers ; the fixed habits of perhaps many years ; the not unreasonable prejudices of hearers in favour of a plan which at any rate gives landmarks, and helps memory, are all so many factors in the formation of a practice, about which everybody at last does exactly as he chooses, and which practically justifies itself wherever it commands success. In some things, however, we shall all concur : that there should be a definite and orderly arrangement pervading the sermon ; that it is usually inexpedient to alarm the congregation by a too extensive and fatiguing prospect of the road in front of them ; that everything should be kept in its proper place ; that "the sermon ought to go on growing, and the hearer be made to feel more and more the weight of truth."

Sermons, after all, as we have hinted already, like everything else, are best tested by their results ; and so long as they instruct, affect, impress, and convert, they cannot be far wrong.

The second analysis completed, with its head, trunk, extremities, and vertebræ, a vast relief is felt in the completed decision of the mind as to the main features of the scheme ; and though much yet remains to be done, the mind can now safely concentrate itself on one fixed centre, and will easily, and almost unconsciously, assimilate to its own powers of production whatever suitable to its purpose comes in its way.

III. Next in order comes the gathering and the arranging of the materials, about which I presume to offer a few practical suggestions. In the first place, make a painstaking and conscientious use of your own resources. Pick your own brains before you pick other men's. It is honest. It is industrious. It will help you to understand where it is you most want help, whether in clearness or argument, or matter or illustration. It will go to make the sermon in a great measure your own; at any rate the best part of it, and all that is fairly possible. Secondly, collect and compare the Scriptures on the point, and weave them into your subject with judgment and discrimination. Fénelon has some very useful remarks here. After observing that "the most essential quality of a preacher is to be instructive," he proceeds, "But we must be well instructed ourselves to be able to instruct others, and we must perfectly understand the expressions of Scripture, as well as know exactly the capacity of the minds to which we speak. Some sermons are beautiful reasonings upon religion, and not religion itself. It is much easier to describe the disorders of the world than to explain solidly the fundamentals of Christianity, which means a serious and profound study of Scripture. Scripture is often quoted suddenly, or for good taste, or for ornament. Then it is no more the word of God, but the invention of men. If preachers would study Scripture more,

they would always have, without difficulty, a great number of new and grand things to say. It is deplorable to see how this treasure is neglected by those who have it every day in their hands." Thirdly, it is a good plan to read any sermons on the subject you have by you, if only you are careful not to use them for the entire treatment of the passage, but simply for points and emendations, as the setting of your sermon, not the substance of it. Yet a better way still is to read one good sermon daily—a rule which is easily possible in the holidays, and might, with a little resolution, be quite practicable for some of us at other times.

There are, however, three excusable, yet serious, perils in this part of our subject, against which the young composer should be emphatically warned. 1. He should avoid anything like padding, or the inserting of what, by a far too indulgent euphony, is called matter, but is really a sort of watery pap. All padding should be treated like the splendid adjectives or eloquent bursts in a sermon—carefully excised with a sharp pen. 2. Let him eschew the very common fear of not having enough to say, and so spinning out one part, which is usually the first and perhaps the least important, to the curtailment, if not the discomfiture, of the rest. The subject is sure to unfold itself as you get further into it; and, like one of nature's silkworms, will spin its own



cocoon. 3. Remember also that there is such a fault—and especially with painstaking men—as overcrowding a sermon with too much matter: a fault which, if it may be to some degree aggravated by the practice we are now considering, of accumulating materials for our sermons, has its very easy remedy and pleasant reward in our leaving what we do not immediately want for other sermons to follow. While on the one hand the sermon must not be text and water, dishonouring the Master to whom it is offered, and cheating the people to whom it is spoken, so on the other hand we must not make it what travellers in North America recognise under the name of pemmican; since what is impossible of digestion is practically of as little use to the ordinary mind as that which gives it nothing to digest.

IV. The sermon cast into shape, the materials collected and sifted, the point and aim of the discourse clearly seized and firmly grasped, it is well, where there is opportunity for it, to leave an interval of a day or two before the final composition is made. This delay is valuable in aiding what is one of the most important though insufficiently recognised processes in the full maturing of the subject, and is what may roughly be defined as the simmering and fermentation of it in the preacher's mind; for hereby the memory, through a sort of magnetic action, attracts to itself any particles of useful matter laid

up in its secret storehouse; and the imagination, quite one of the most valuable of the mental faculties for sermon-writing, has time to illuminate and almost reconstruct it with an atmosphere and colouring of its own; and the understanding can deliberately adjust its proportions, construct its arguments, and draw its conclusions.

Not, however, that we are never to be thinking of anything else but the sermon. In a certain sense, we shall do well totally to forget it; and too great concentration of aim on only one of our manifold functions might easily defeat its own object, while compelling the fatal neglect of all the rest. But what I want to press—even at the risk of not at once carrying all along with me—is this: that the recreations as well as the duties of our life may, if rightly used and applied, be even a direct help in the instruction of our people; and that a quick and watchful intelligence may, without strain or effort, easily and almost unconsciously extract from the society, or the literature, or the fine arts of our secular life, edification for the Church of God.

Does any one ask, for instance, what on earth pictures can have to do with sermon-making? I answer (may I say from long experience?), a very great deal indeed, since many of the qualities that go to make an artist, or that help us to appreciate his art, are invaluable aids to a sermon. The way

for instance, in which a great picture strikes the imagination with the breadth and width of the world, the infinite varieties of human life and interest, the power and wisdom of God in nature, the picturesque details of great events in history, which the genius of a poet, who has first thought and then worked it out on the canvas, helps you almost for the first time to appreciate, and ever afterwards to retain,—all go to quicken the sensibilities, to open the pores of the entire spiritual being to new and stirring impressions, to set us thinking and feeling, to transport us, at least for a little while, from the narrow and shallow eddies of our own limited experience, to watch the billows as they roll in from the tempests of the universe to break on the world's shore.

Or do any ask what going into society, or dining out in company, can possibly have to do with the preparation of a message from God? None of us, indeed, are in danger of supposing that society can be regenerated by dining with it; and as to the expediency of such mixing with society, each man must be persuaded for himself in his own mind. But assuming that we do it, then, I say, at least two things may accrue from it, and neither of them of trifling importance in testing our reality and in widening our experience.

You go, let us say, fresh from your study and your Bible, into the company of intelligent, refined, and

pleasant persons, many of whom will be strangers to you, and of whose previous life and personal religion you are totally ignorant. You pass a few hours there, and then you go back to your unfinished sermon. Well, quite apart from the wholesome bracing influence that a humble and sensible man may be glad indirectly to derive from those who, if in some things his inferiors, will be in some his equals, perhaps in many his masters, may you not be provoked thereby to ask yourself, How far do I really and honestly feel all this that I am now writing to be suitable and necessary and true? Is it as good for the rich as for the poor? Is it as essential for the respectable as for the vicious? Have I had the courage to say it privately, as well as to preach it publicly? How much in my sermons is a mere conventional and artificial theology? How much of it is the living truth of the living God burning like a fire in my heart? Coming out of the crowded church, where sedate faces and respectful ears at least appear to listen to me, to meet the same people, now their real selves, either in the fortress of their own homes or the neutral ground of their neighbours', do I find my Master's love for single souls in any wise characterising my private and social intercourse? do I feel that, as a fisher of men, I must angle as well as net—that even when I net, as often as I can, I must bring my fish to land? As for secular reading (in which I



include, of course, the reading of poetry and fiction, as well as the journals), the great justification of it, and use from it, is surely this: that in the easiest and quickest and least perilous way possible it brings us into some mental contact with those aspects of secular life with which we have no other opportunity of becoming actually and personally acquainted, but which not in some way to know, and to meet, involves a great loss to our knowledge of human nature and a serious diminution of our usefulness as the ambassadors of Christ. Surely, then, it is no strain on common sense, no flight too lofty for practical men to reach after, to entertain the hope that each day's common life, with its breaks and changes, its small details, its new impressions, may be a powerful though subtle influence, both on the tone of our character and the substance of our sermons. God speaks to us by a thousand voices, works in us by a thousand processes. The matter must first be in us before it can go out of us. But if Holy Scripture is our subject, and God the Holy Ghost our Teacher, culture makes the ink, and life guides the pen.

V. The actual composition of the sermon is hardly within my province. It is a subject to itself, and would soon tempt us beyond our proper limits. But for completeness' sake I venture to suggest, even here, a few practical considerations and important cautions. Clearly there can be no universal or

arbitrary rule as to length of time desirable for composition ; nor is there much use in examining the comparative advantages of finishing it off at a single sitting, or of humouring the languor of a tired head at the risk of the Nemesis of to-morrow's regret over the unfinished task of to-day.

The human mind is not a grinding machine, but a living organ ; not only very different in different men, but different in the same man on different days. If you over-drive it, it may take its revenge on you, either by striking altogether, or by turning out such bad work that you are ashamed to own it. Yet sometimes it is but sluggishness, that only needs pushing, instantly to obey the spur. Some heads, again, always work slowly, others rapidly ; some best without food at all, or only of the slightest kind ; others, like Christopher North, need the support of plentiful food at frequent intervals. It is not always the quickest work that saves time in the end ; in sermon writing, as in other things, the hare is often beaten by the tortoise. Sometimes, however, slow composition means that the head is out of gear ; and then what is slow is bad. This, however, is beyond dispute : that certain parts of a sermon are best worked off at once, and not left unfinished ; also that when the head is tired, or time insufficient for completing it properly, conscience as well as judgment will suggest the postponement of the task. The

mental heat and the moral sympathy with the subject will all come back when you sit down to it next day, if only you are careful to read through what has been written before you begin again. As to interruptions, no one likes them at the moment, but they often hinder us much less than they threaten to do.

Some sorts of intrusion we must firmly resist, in the interest of our people quite as much as our own, or our sermons will be but scrappy and ill-joined fragments, rather than the consolidated arrangement of connected truth. But there is now and then an interruption which it would be peevishness to resent, or a sin to refuse; and many a clergyman, summoned from his Bible or his manuscript to a sick or dying bed, and for a moment tempted to wish that his sermon could have been finished before his visit was paid, goes and does his duty, serves his God, and does not please himself, to come back amply rewarded, with a glow in his heart and a spring in his mind, that help him to point with a new moral, or touch with a fresh pathos, or conclude with a solemn monition, the sermon which an hour before he put away with a half-vexed regret.

VI. The sermon written and laid aside, the preparation of it may not unreasonably be supposed to be completed likewise; and so it would be, if all of us wrote our sermons just as they should be

delivered, or if the preparation included only the mechanical and intellectual labour.

But may I presume to press on my younger brethren—to whom, indeed, all through this paper, I have intended exclusively to address myself—the expediency of some interval between the composition of the sermon and its actual delivery? Not to be pedantically accurate in the chronology of the subject, I would suggest that the text be chosen on the Sunday; the thinking out the plan, collecting the materials, comparing the Scriptures, and completing the analysis, no later than Tuesday; the writing out the sermon on Thursday, and then one clear day will be left for the absolute and even intentional oblivion of its very existence, except a secret sense of satisfaction at the thought of the work being done. On Saturday the sermon is brought out for its final criticism by the author of its birth; and let us freely confess that it is a moment quite as often of disappointment as of self-elation, when the mind, occupied by a multitude of other things in the interval, approaches its own offspring with the coldness of a stranger, and yet the sensitiveness of a parent.

This final criticism, however, is of the greatest possible use, both to the sermon and to its author. Let no self-love blunt the keenness of the knife that prunes the too luxuriant imagery, or deprecate the severe accuracy with which the reason weighs in



honest balances the aptness of the quotations, the proportions of the treatment, the purity of the style, the cogency of the argument. Perhaps no hour over all the sermon can be more usefully, ought to be more conscientiously, employed than this one. The searching question will often cross us, "Is this to glorify God, or to please man?" And if it is our sincere desire to give our Divine Master the very best we have to give Him, we shall feel neither to waste our time nor grudge our pains. Soon, however—let us confess—the heart grows secretly happier as we thus present it and recast it before God. We no longer despair of making something of it, when here an added sentence gives light or freshness, there a felicitous quotation gives wings to a heavy page or transparency to a dull one. Perhaps even to the last moment we may go on touching here and adding there, to make it quite our best. And we remember the answer made to Demosthenes, when he complained that though he liked his new oration well enough the first time of reading it, he liked it less the second time, and not at all the third: "True, Demosthenes; but then the Athenians will hear it only once."

VII. In the brief interval between the final criticism and the actual delivery there are still three important processes that complete the preparation of the sermon. They are the mechanical, the per-



sonal, and the spiritual. With a few words on each of these points my task will be done.

By mechanical preparation I do not understand the standing before a glass in an oratorical attitude, but I do mean the carefully reading aloud the sermon in our own study by ourselves, that we may see how to modulate the voice—where to change the tone, where to be slow, and where rapid ; the time that it is likely to take in preaching ; and, in a right use of the word, the action that will aid the delivery, and so point the truth. By personal preparation I mean two things. One of them that physical preparedness for the sermon, about which some of our junior brethren may for the present afford to be indifferent, but which to older men is of great consequence indeed,—that which results from a good night's rest, a feeling of health and vigour, and last but not least, a careful diet, about which the greatest of Scotch preachers is reported to have said that there was hardly anything he would not give to the man who would tell him what to eat on Saturday. The other is a mental and moral preparedness, both in knowing the sermon well, through having thoroughly mastered it in all its details, and also in an instinct of good-humoured sense about it, that having done your best, you leave it with God and your people, discarding with a sort of sturdy contempt the small and fidgety vanity of wondering if it will be admired.

Most of all, there is the spiritual preparation whereby our own soul is stirred and helped to utter it, and intercession made for the people, that into docile and prepared hearts the good seed may fall. First preach it to your own conscience, on your knees before God, humbly, earnestly asking Him to give you a blessing that you may pass on to your people; to slay in you the sins you are rebuking in them; to nourish and strengthen in your own spirit the good work of His grace. To be real—real—real: this is our first duty. Blessed is he who has never come home smitten with a profound depression at having laid burdens on his brethren that he is conscious of not even trying to bear himself. Then plead with God that He will forgive it, and accept it, and use it in His own way and measure for the glorifying of His name and for the exalting of His Christ, filling you with His grace, anointing your heart with power, giving you the sense of His fellowship with you and His presence in you, when you openly stand up before the people to speak as the oracles of God.

And then go like men to your flock, with faith that it is God's word, and He will take care of it; with hope that sooner or later it shall magnify Him, whether as sowing what some one else shall reap, or as harvesting what some one else has sown; with love, tender and strong and brimming over, to Him who has so marvellously honoured you in making

you the mouthpiece of His Word to the sheep He loves, whom, through your lips, the Good Shepherd deigns to feed. For if we are indeed fellow-workers with God, there are but two things we have to do in the matter: to take great pains, and to expect great results. "If the preparation of the heart and the answer of the tongue are both from God . . . every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."



## *The End or Object of a Sermon.*

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## II.

### *THE END OR OBJECT OF A SERMON.*

I SHALL endeavour to deal with my subject chiefly in a practical manner,—that is to say, not merely to regard the question as a theme for an essay, bringing out general principles, but rather to colour the answer with remarks drawn from the character of the times, and from the facts of experience.

We all agree that the present times are some of the most critical of any through which the Church and the world have ever passed. They are the consequence and the result of some of the most stupendous events happening at the close of the last century and the first half of this, which have ever taken place in the history of mankind. In themselves they are stamped with the impress of deeds, both of a beneficent and a destructive nature, which can never be forgotten, and they are evidently preparing the way for changes of the most momentous character for succeeding generations. Out of these critical circumstances arise special claims upon

the preachers of the Word of God to adapt their sermons to the experiences through which the men of their day are passing,—not, indeed, to alter one iota of the message, but so to deliver it as to secure the attention of those to whom they preach, and to commend its gracious offers to their acceptance.

The complaint of Chrysostom as to the difficulty of carrying out the aim and object of ministers of the Word is very applicable now. He says that it may be a difficult matter to keep those already within their charge, or to make the addition of others who had not yet come over; and he shows that the remedy is to be sought in those who preach the Word. “Men are required,” he says, “receiving power from the Holy Ghost, showing fervent alacrity of mind, readiness to endure privation and peril,—men of administrative power and wisdom, blameless in life, apt to teach, and attributive of everything to the grace of God.”\*

And as requirements like these are never out of date for the men who preach sermons, so we have certain rules given by St. Augustine as to the aim and object of a sermon, which lie at the root of all preaching in general, and are fully adapted to special times and circumstances. I would recommend young composers of sermons especially to bear his words in mind: “Orator Christianus debet

\* “Homil. in Joan.”

docere, delectare, flectere: docere ut instruat, delectare ut teneat, flectere ut vincat;" and then the threefold result will follow, logically attached to the threefold work, the threefold aim: "Docere ut instruat, ut audiatur intelligenter; delectare ut teneat, ut audiatur libenter; flectere ut vincat, ut audiatur obedienter."\*

A sermon which conveys instruction to the mind, which arrests the attention, and is calculated to bend the will, has in it all the elements of excellence. I need not say that it requires painstaking study to provide the instruction; careful preparation, as well as fervour of spirit, to secure the attention; and a very definite object in view as the practical result aimed at, as well as earnest and continual prayer for the blessing of the Holy Spirit of God. The first sermon preached in the Christian Church contains all these elements of excellence—the teaching, the interesting the attention, the practical application; and so "men and brethren," the loving address of the preacher, became the "men and brethren" in the penitent question of the hearers: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Now, based on these leading rules, arising as they do out of the deeply rooted principles on which the

\* "De Docti Christiana," iv. 12, 17, quoting and adapting Cicero, "De Oratore."

effect of speaking to multitudes depends, there is a special adaptation of the course we have to pursue, which may, perhaps, be expressed thus :—

A sermon, to be effective—

1. Must meet the thoughts which occupy men's minds.
2. Must deal with the sorrows of their actual experience.
3. Must commend itself to their consciences as in the sight of God in those things which concern sin and salvation.

I. A sermon must meet the thoughts which occupy men's minds. A bad effect is produced when such thoughts find a response only in the leading articles of newspapers, or in reviews and periodicals. But when he who dispenses the Word of God shows that he is acquainted with the doubts and difficulties of his hearers, and is able to solve or to remove them, he is at once placed on a high vantage ground for commending the truth which he has to deliver. Let us take for an instance the subject of modern progress. It is in all men's minds—on all men's lips—and is often connected with serious misgivings as to the claims which a religion professing to have made no progress in the matter of its teaching can have upon the attention and obedience of men of the nineteenth century. If the preacher goes carefully into this subject, analyses it accurately, and draws



distinctions which cannot be gainsayed, it will be easy for him to secure the thoughtful attention of his hearers while he gratefully acknowledges all that modern progress has really effected, but shows that its results touch only what is outward and superficial; that while, for instance, the art of printing has vastly multiplied the power of producing copies of a poem, the power of making poetry has not been increased; that while the electric current sends tidings from remote regions in as many hours almost as it formerly took months, yet the essential character of the tidings is the same that it ever was—touching the same human feelings as before; that while Science, to use the eloquent words of one of her greatest sons, “can triumph over the waves of the sea, she has no secret for calming the disquietudes of ambition;” and therefore, because the deep cravings of the heart and the trials of the soul remain the same, we need the same Gospel which was wanted by our fathers, and those of the old time before them. It seems to me that those who feel that we can meet their thoughts about such matters are likely to listen more confidently and reverently when we speak to them of “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever.”

Then, to take a much lower kind of audience (intellectually speaking), it will generally be found that every little community has its own prejudices—preconceived notions to which it clings as to

fundamental axioms—unless pains are taken to meet these thoughts. For instance, a preacher of the Word finds himself in a ship with seventy or eighty sailors. They are likely to be together for many weeks, and he will have many opportunities of addressing them. Now, he will find there are two lines of thought in those men's minds, which oppose a serious hindrance to his ministrations amongst them; and although one of them will raise a smile, still I mention it because I have on more than one occasion witnessed the good effect of meeting it, and believe nothing in the way of hindrance is too insignificant to engage the attention of those who labour to win souls. The prejudice to which I refer is connected with the story of Jonah, and it works strongly in many sailors' minds, until it is disarmed, which is easily done by the simple remark, "It is quite true that Jonah brought the ship in which he sailed into trouble; but the reason was, that he was running away from his duty; but I am going to do mine."

Another prejudice is, that religion does very well for people in other callings, but does not suit the life of a sailor. Now, such thoughts exist and work, and they must be met; and the nearer they can be met in sailor fashion the better. A striking history of a converted sailor does it exactly. A man who was so thoroughly a seaman that he always used the

language of the sea, even on his dying bed, when a friend came to ask him how he was, replied, "Land in sight!" and to a similar question some time after, "How are you now, brother?" "Just casting anchor in the Bay of Glory." Such an instance is better than a thousand laboured arguments, because with such men it falls in their way of thinking.

Again, an illustration of the need of thus meeting the workings of thought among different classes was shown a few months ago in a parish in Yorkshire, where, with the rough-and-ready manner usual among the lower orders there, a clergyman, on first meeting some of his parishioners, was asked, "Have ye read t' *Essays and Reviews*?" "Yes." "Then we'll come and hear ye."

To Archdeacon Paley's well-known direction that sermons should be *local*, I would add another—that they should be *contemporary*. And it is a noticeable fact that sermons like those of Chrysostom, which attracted crowds of people day after day to listen with eager interest in the large churches of Antioch and Constantinople, supply the fullest source of information for the manners and customs of the times in which he lived. Like Augustine and Basil, he discusses with his congregation the topics of their daily conversation—argues from the pulpit objections which they heard in the market-place—and uses similitudes drawn from the associations of their daily

life, to move their feelings, taking care to give them when moved a heavenward direction.

In close connection with this part of my subject, I would mention the importance of attaching practical thoughts to terms which, from frequent use, produce very superficial or very vague impressions.

The term the *world*, in its bad sense—how vague and undefined it is! But the hearers of Augustine were taught its meaning by one of those exhaustive discussions which satisfy the intellect and touch the heart: “Mundi, amores, terrores, errores;” allurements to evil, hindrances and terrors to frighten away from what is good, false opinions and doctrines to deceive the mind.

So with the word *time*,—he gives a threefold division: *præteritum*, *præsens*, *futurum*; then shows that there is a power of the mind which answers to the past—*memoria*; a power of the mind which answers to the future—*expectatio*; a power of the mind which answers to the present—*attentio*. *Memoria præteriti*; *expectatio futuri*; *attentio præsentis*.

Very salutary and practical results are likely to follow such a concise and yet clear and forcible explanation and application of the term, generally so vague and indefinite.

Chrysostom’s use of similitudes drawn from the objects of daily life is one of the marked features of his preaching, and his allusions to the habits of



luxurious people in his day were as plain and incisive as even they could tolerate,—when, for instance, he spoke of the expensive jewellery which adorned the persons of ladies in his congregation, while multitudes were suffering from want of the necessities of life : “In one tip of her little ear she wears a ring, the price of which would give food to ten thousand poor Christians.”

Augustine, in dealing with those murmurings about Divine Providence which he calls “*Mare magnum tentationis*,” takes up a common objection in this style : “The thunderbolt strikes the mountain which has done no wrong, and spares the robber hid in its caves who has done wrong.” How is this consistent with the Psalmist’s expression, “fulfilling His word” ? \* “*Pro modulo meo*,” he says, I will try to explain this. Probably God is seeking the conversion of that robber, and He strikes the mountain which cannot fear, that the man who can fear may be converted. Sometimes you also, when you are administering discipline, strike the earth that your child may fear. (“*Aliquando et tu cum das disciplinam feris terram, ut infans expavescat*.”)

II. Again, sermons are needed which deal with the sorrows of human experience. This is the emotional aspect of the previous division of our subject, which may be called the *intellectual*.

\* Psalm cxlviii. 8.



Perhaps there is no feature more strongly marked in the ministry of our Lord than this. The Sermon on the Mount proclaims the blessing which belongs to sanctified sorrow, and the dispositions which attend it. His last discourse is full of comfortable words for those who were likely to be troubled by the separations, apprehensions, and persecutions, and various sorrows which make up the tribulation of the world. "The Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" dealt with the sorrows of those among whom He walked in a spirit of sympathy and mercy—so as "to bind up the broken-hearted,"—"to comfort all that mourn, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." And when we remember how largely affliction enters into the experience of every congregation, how thankfully words of kind sympathy are listened to even by those who care not much for other communication from the preacher's lips, and how precious the ministration of comfort is when coming from those who seem to understand the sorrow which needs it, we must see how important a part of the work of a preacher of the Word it is to deal in a right spirit with the subject of human sorrow: broken fortunes, blighted prospects, disappointed expectations, the pains of separation and bereavement, the discouragements of toil and poverty,

the depression of failing health, the sorrows caused by the sufferings and the perils of those near and dear.

Very valuable is the sermon which deals judiciously and affectionately with subjects like these, and which ministers wisely and tenderly the consolations of the Gospel. In this way the grateful confidence of hearers is elicited, and a sacred bond of sympathetic affection is formed and strengthened, which often proves amongst the strongest and most enduring. Is not this one of the chief causes which make the proverb true, "A house-going clergyman makes a church-going people"—that such visitation gives a knowledge of the actual realities of trial and sorrow which elicits consolation at the home, and produces in the pulpit the real dealing with life as it is?

There are many circumstances which make the present times to be times of sorrow. Take the one fact of the wide diffusion of members of English families all over the world—the pains of separation, the tidings of death, the fearful catastrophes by which hundreds are engulfed at once in the waves of the sea: who is there of us that has not been called to minister comfort on occasions such as these? And how can a ministry be any other than a mere perfunctory discharge of a round of duties, which does not deal with such subjects at solemn meetings of the people in the house of God? While, on the

other hand, the question may also be asked, what is more likely to awaken the attention, to retain the respect and esteem of our hearers, than the reverent, sympathising, affectionate application of the truths of God's Word to occurrences in God's world?

III. But above all—and, indeed, involving all the rest—is the need of a ministry which will approve itself to men's consciences in the sight of God in those things which concern sin and salvation. "Let a man so account of us as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." A stronger censure could not well be pronounced on a ministry of the Word, than what was once meant to be an expression of approval of the style and matter of a certain preacher's sermons. "I like to go and hear him on the Sunday morning, for a man may commit adultery on the Wednesday, and go and hear him on the Sunday without having his conscience disturbed." It could not be said of that pulpit that "the word which came from it was quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, being a discerner even of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Felix might have listened there without trembling. But the preacher of the gospel has authority to deal with sin—sin in its nature—

sin in history—sin in biography—sin in its moral consequences—sin in its everlasting punishment; the deceitfulness of sin, the disgrace and shame, the peril and the pain of it; and where men talk, for instance, about social evil, to denounce God's wrath against it; when they give way to self-indulgence and luxury, and forget their obligations to the poor and needy, to repeat the words of inspiration, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;" and to reiterate, with proper adaptation to the forms of evil which may be in the ascendant, the solemn admonition—leaving no mistake as to its application—"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

Such preaching will doubtless arouse anger and opposition, but it will also command respect; and when men are led to see their sins in the light of God's Word, they are likely to be impressed with the truth that they themselves are in the light of God's countenance; and as the secrets of a man's heart are thus made manifest to him he is likely to worship God, and to repeat that God is in that congregation of a truth. I believe few of us are aware how much consciousness of wrong, and even conviction of sinfulness, is latent in the hearts of



crowds who worship in our churches ; and when they see their experience mirrored not in the unhealthy pages of a sensational novel, but in the wholesome utterances of the truth of God's Word, the conviction often becomes, under the influence of God's Spirit, irresistible, and leads to that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of.

Again, to pass from the dealing with hidden sin and latent conviction, how many examples occur in God's providence of the unmasking of secret sin, when a long course of hidden wickedness is brought to light, and the manifestation which is made is like a rehearsal of what shall take place on the day of judgment ! When by the agency of the press such events are exposed to the gaze of the whole world, surely it is required of preachers to point the moral, to enforce the lesson ; to make reverent acknowledgment of the present government of God ; to lead on the thoughts to that last grand assize, when the books shall be opened and the judgment set, and when, as Chrysostom says, the Judge will know everything better than can be told by any number and variety of witnesses. Moreover, in days like ours, when the destinies of mankind form the subject of speculation and matter of comment in so many directions, there seems to be a special call on the preachers of God's Word



to look often themselves, and frequently to call the attention of their hearers, to that testimony of prophecy which contains the history of the end from the beginning. The frequent attacks made by unbelievers on the Messianic prophecies show their value in the scale of Christian evidence; while the congregation which is built up in the knowledge of Christ, as imparted by Himself to the disciples going to Emmaus, and on other occasions, is more likely to enter into the true nature of His mission—the nature of His work; and the impression of the supernatural, the conviction of the truth of the Word, are likely to be kept clear and strong among those who have been accustomed to careful exposition of what may be called historic prophecy. In this way they are furnished with canons of interpretation of the greatest value of God's dealings in providence, which admit continually of application; and then, when we look reverently into the future, and see the shadows of on-coming events, there is likely to be produced both in us and in our people that expectation of mind which may prepare us and them for its mighty manifestations, and, even if gloom should seem to be settling down on the Church or on the world, may keep alive the lamp of hope.

“That is the heart for watchman true,  
Waiting to see what God will do,

As o'er the church the gathering twilight falls ;  
His spirit calmed the storm to meet,  
Feeling the rock beneath his feet,  
And tracing through the clouds the Eternal Cause."

The dispensations of Providence in our own time, the facts of history, the testimony of prophecy, ought often to make part of our sermons, when we remember that our aim and object is the same as that of John the Baptist—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Above all, the aim and object of our sermons should be to keep Christ ever in the prominent place of pre-eminence. The magnetic power is there. All true successors of the Apostles will, like them, cease not "to teach and preach Jesus Christ." And if men seem to grow weary of the theme, we must still continue—continue prayerfully, faithfully, affectionately, fully, to proclaim the doctrines of salvation through Him, and rely on His presence to work with us in His own time and way. He can so order events, and so influence the minds of men, that they shall have ears to hear and hearts to receive our testimony. With us, as with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, the one paramount object of life should be to testify the gospel of the grace of God; and when we are called to remove to a distance from any flock which for a time had been committed to our charge, or when the last great change shall

separate us from all our earthly work, the most consoling reflection by far which can make us thankful for the past will be the knowledge that we have been ministers of Christ in our spheres of duty—that, in listening to us, the sheep have heard the accents of the voice of the Good Shepherd.

I said at the commencement that I would colour the answer to the question which forms the title of the paper by remarks drawn from the character of our times and the facts of experience. Our times are times marked by a revival of the assaults of unbelief. There is need of careful study, of prudence, and of courage in dealing with such assaults, and in imitating the great champions of the truth in all ages by enforcing the positive doctrine assailed. The obligations which flow from belief in the inspiration of Scripture, the lessons of adoration which are taught by what we know of the creation of the universe, are seen in all their power when the arguments which support the belief that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” and that “in the beginning God created,” have prepared by the assent of the mind the docility of the heart.

Ours are times in which the adherents of Romanism are endeavouring to compensate by successes in England for heavy losses sustained in places forming their greatest strongholds. Their

frauds and falsehoods require unflinching exposure, with the labour to bring into clear light and practical application the positive truth which is gainsayed.

Ours are times in which large masses of population have overgrown the measure of ministerial agency assigned for the supply of their spiritual wants, and we need every variety of style in addressing them. The herald's message to the large congregation in special mission services; the painstaking, diligent teaching, the more familiar conversation in a larger or smaller social gathering, or the lecture on some secular subject, impregnated with the principles of Scripture: in all these ways there is room for the preaching of the Word in its aggressive sense.

Then, again, ours are times in which many members of some congregations—and some members of most congregations—go forth to other lands. The faithful servant will endeavour to imitate his Master, and to say that which may afterwards be remembered to help in preparing them for the trials of their faith and practice.

Our times are times in which the world is open to missionary effort. They require a style of preaching which will not omit the claims of the heathen, not only mentioning them at anniversaries, but incorporating the principles of missionary-action with all the other teaching of the duty of a Christian man.

Finally, ours are times in which there is a large number of well-trained Christian people, who love the truth, and are ready for every good work. For such persons a style of preaching is needed in which both those who preach and those who hear may be helped on to higher stages of Christian knowledge and Christian life. To be helpers of their joy—to pray that they may abound in hope—to forget, and teach them to forget, the things that are behind, and reach forth unto the things that are before,—such are some of the objects of the Christian ministry, which it may be feared do not receive sufficient attention in this age of multifarious occupation. And yet they must be ranked amongst the most important, if we would keep those whom we have, and add to our ranks those who now keep aloof; for it is only as we have with us a band of men whose hearts God has touched, that we can really hope to see His work prospering amongst us.

Let the question which naturally arises in our hearts be considered with deep humility: “Who is sufficient for these things?” and let the answer be held fast with undoubting prayerful confidence: “Our sufficiency is of God.”





## Homely Hints on Preaching.

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### III.

#### *HOMELY HINTS ON PREACHING.*

THERE is a certain advantage in giving simply "hints" for preaching, and in taking care that those hints shall be "homely"; because preaching, though one of the highest and greatest tasks in which man can be engaged, is one of the commonplaces of Christianity. Sermons are delivered much oftener than week by week throughout the year. Almost any suggestions, therefore, for their improvement must have their value; and as to the "experience" which is to be the source of these hints, any one who has been more than thirty years in Holy Orders, and has been engaged throughout that time in active and varied work, must have observed many things very useful to himself, and therefore not useless to his neighbours. He must have felt his own difficulties, and found out some at least of his own defects; and he must have marked both the excellences and the defects of others. He must therefore have received some impressions which it is worth while to compare and combine with the impressions of those around him.

I do not enter far into the debate which might

naturally arise at the outset, between the relative advantages of written sermons and spoken sermons. Most of this ground I treat as an open question. Each method has its strong points and its weak points. There is no doubt that direct oral preaching is the more natural; and it is no wonder that a large number of persons prefer it. Under some circumstances (let me especially refer to the people of Wales) it is probably unwise to preach in any other way. And even to English people, with their colder temperament, what are called extempore sermons present this attraction—that they appear to come more from the heart than sermons deliberately written beforehand. Yet even in this instinctive criticism there is often some misapprehension. I have heard of a Scotch minister not being visible on Saturday, because he was, as his servant said, “*commutting*,” or, in other words, learning by heart, for the next day, a composition on which he had been laboriously engaged through the earlier part of the week. The public opinion, which requires the semblance of extempore preaching, when the reality is absent, is certainly a tyranny. And on the other hand we must remember that large numbers of our better educated classes in England prefer written sermons, and this for reasons which are not to be disregarded. Such sermons are viewed as not mere efforts for the moment: having been carefully prepared, it is pre-



sumed that they contain something worthy of being remembered; and the written manuscript is considered a salutary check upon hasty utterances on a serious and responsible occasion. Yet here again there may be misapprehension in the criticism. It does not at all follow that because the manuscript is ready and complete, therefore it has cost any real thought, or contains anything of permanent value. Perhaps some of the most useless sermons are those that are produced by extempore writing. This is a severe expression; but such severity is good for some of us. Our clerical Saturdays in England see a good deal of this extempore writing. Something must be got ready for the necessary time in the pulpit on Sunday. The problem may be solved well or ill, but solved it must be. I am well aware of the exigencies which sometimes arise without any fault of our own. But in a paper like this a high standard must be set before us. The only other remark I will make on the comparison of written and oral sermons is this, (and I will suppose myself writing for young men,) If extemporaneous speaking is difficult to you, take pains to acquire this power, and persevere till you succeed; if again free oral utterance is easy to you, then be sure that you write much and write carefully, lest through fluency you run away from discipline. In each case let your "homely hints" be derived from the "experience" of defects.

And there is another debated question into which I decline to enter at any length. I institute no comparison into the relative advantages of long sermons and short sermons. This only will I observe: that the impression of length in a sermon does not always depend entirely, or even chiefly, on the hands of the clock. Preachers vary extremely in their power of securing and maintaining attention. Some men can carry an audience along with them, and keep them moving onwards from point to point, so that a time really long appears at the end to have been very short. But other modes of preaching have a different result. We have heard of the clergyman who, knowing that a certain master of patronage, then present in the church, was fond of short sermons, took care to be very brief, and who, when the sermon was ended, asked the patron how he liked the sermon, and received the reply, "You were certainly not very long." On which the clergyman said, "I did not wish to be tedious;" and the rejoinder was, "I did not say you were not tedious." In this matter we must, I think, derive some "homely hints" from our own "experience." Still there are certain general suggestions which cannot wisely be overlooked. The Englishman's family dinner on Sunday is an event which cannot be trifled with, and which has a very important bearing on his power

of listening continuously after the middle part of the day. Moreover, our customary morning service is extremely long. And again, the fashion and taste of the day point to short compositions as those which are on the whole preferred. The rapidly read article in the newspaper, the hasty essay covering only two or three pages in the magazine, form a strong contrast to the long and laboriously written books of the older time, which are on the shelves of our libraries. Our sermons must, of course, feel the influence of the prevalent habit of the times: and we ought carefully to acquire the power of delivering, on suitable occasions, short pointed addresses in the pulpit. I may conclude what occurs to me under this head by saying, that if I were required to spend an hour on two Sunday sermons, I should not divide the time into two equal parts, but should be disposed to preach twenty minutes in the morning, and forty in the evening. Our evening congregations consist largely of those who, after a short service, are rather glad to have a long sermon, and can listen to it easily. The morning sermons are preached, as I have said, under different conditions, and our more highly educated people, too, who are then at church, are impatient of prolixity.

I will still make one further introductory remark. I can hardly help speaking in a somewhat didactic

fashion: but I hope this will not be misunderstood, for, when attempting to give hints, this method is evidently the most convenient. Let me now proceed to the hints themselves.

1. First, then, I would say, *Preach as if you intended to be listened to.* Go into the pulpit with this intention in your mind. This will give an air of reality to your words, it will put you into immediate contact with the minds of those whom you address, and it will tend to make you preach in your natural voice. You do not go into the pulpit merely to read something for the sake of reading it—merely to do something which must be done, but which, on the whole, you would rather not do at all. Some people preach as though they wished not to be listened to; and the people instinctively take notice of this apparent desire, and act accordingly. What I am here venturing to recommend is something very different from a mere jaunty self-confidence. Nothing can be more indecorous and offensive than that, and few things more culpable. Neither has it anything in common with a rough and harsh dogmatism: it is quite consistent with that deference to a congregation which apostolic example teaches us to cultivate. Still, whatever be the danger of such faults, a sermon is an address to an assembled audience for purposes of persuasion; and the manner ought



to be in harmony with the meaning of what is done.

2. I spoke just now of *the voice*, and my second point has reference to *its careful management*. I am not mentioning this for the purpose of giving you technical and professional advice. I do not presume to think that I could do this efficiently. But there are some things, in regard to this matter, which experience has impressed upon me.

Give out your text clearly and firmly. Let there be no doubt as to the real words of the text, and its place in Holy Scripture. Of this you may be very sure—that your text is the best part of your sermon. It seems to me a good plan to give out the text twice; and if people say to you that such a custom is pedantic, give no heed to such criticism.

You will expect me to say something on distinctness of articulation. No words can exaggerate the importance of this. The advice which is commonly given may be summed up in the maxim, "Take care of the consonants, and the vowels will take care of themselves." This is, on the whole, a true maxim, but it is only approximately true. Some men pronounce their vowels very badly and incorrectly, and the result is most unpleasing. Still the great difficulty is with the consonants; and every man ought to find out and observe with what organs, and with what use of these organs, they are



produced—how the throat, the palate, the tongue, the teeth, the lips, are severally employed, so as to produce the sounds in question. Without this knowledge and observation it will be almost impossible to cure defects.

Let it be remembered, too, that each consonantal sound has a separate existence, and has a right to this separate existence. The same thing is true of words and of sentences. No doubt words may be sent out separately from the mouth, like drops out of a medicine-bottle, in a manner which is ludicrous and provoking. But if words are impinged against one another, and jammed into one another, the result must be confusion on the part of the speaker and inattention on the part of the hearers. You can imagine their feelings under such circumstances, if you remember the irritating effect sometimes produced on yourself by that kind of handwriting in which the words are run into one another and entangled together on the page. And as with words, so with sentences. Those groups of words which we call sentences are marked off on the page by punctuation, so as to be isolated and self-existent. And in vocal utterance to the ear, this their right ought to be preserved. To secure this end, the voice should not be unduly lowered at the close of a sentence; and it is not always easy to manage this without speaking artificially.

This brings me to another point, which I regard as the most important of all. Be sure, when in the pulpit, to speak in your natural voice. God has given you a certain voice; and you are sure to be punished, and your audience punished too, if you use another voice. The power of listening is marvellously diminished if we do not speak naturally. And yet the habit of adopting a non-natural voice in the pulpit is so common, that the risk of this fault is almost universal. Where these non-natural voices come from is a difficult and puzzling question. They get into the lungs, throat, and mouth of the preacher, in the short interval during which he mounts the pulpit stair. If we ask why a man speaks artificially in the pulpit, though the very same man will speak quite naturally on the platform, I imagine that the reason may be this,—that in the latter case he must conceive it possible that there may be interruption, and that he may be called to defend himself and to reply, whereas in the former case the congregation is absolutely unprotected. However this may be, the point with which we have to deal in this part of our subject is very serious; and we must lay it down as a truth, that it is by no means easy for a preacher, without taking some pains, to address a congregation in his natural voice. The case of the barrister is very different, who speaks on common topics in

a place of no great size, and has seldom need to go beyond the limits of what may be called eloquent and persuasive conversation. The conditions of a sermon are extremely different from those of conversation. It is a great safeguard to be aware of our danger in this respect. A young clergyman should watch himself very carefully at first ; for bad habits, once formed, are not easy to correct. And we should all be ready to welcome the criticism of our friends, and to welcome that criticism all the more if it is unpalatable. We must bear in mind that in preaching our business is to reach our people's hearts by means of utterance ; hence it is our duty to make the vehicle by which our truth reaches them as good as we can.

I will make only one other remark before passing to my next point. A written sermon may be so read as to have all the animation and life of a speech ; and a sermon uttered without paper or notes may be as dull as a schoolboy's lesson.

3. And now I suggest, in the third place, this : *Present your subject well on several sides.* Let your people have the opportunity of going round it and looking at it well, so as to distinguish it definitely from every other subject. Don't let your sermon on one subject be almost what it would have been if preached upon some other subject. Of course, in order to secure this end, you must have in your own

mind a clear view of your subject—you must have isolated it, so to speak, and looked at it well on its various sides. All this implies close attention and careful thought from the beginning to the end of the composition of your sermon.

The choice of subject is a matter of great importance, and not always very easy. On this I shall have a word to say presently. But when the subject is chosen, then comes the preparing of the mode of its presentation. It is evidently important, whether the sermon is rapidly or slowly written, or not written at all, still that sufficient time should have been taken for the contemplation and weighing of the subject. My experience tells me that it is well to have the beginning of this preparation well in advance of the moment of preaching. Some men make it a rule to fix every Sunday evening upon their subject for the following Sunday, and their mode of treating it; and I imagine that no one, after having done this, would be likely to sleep the worse after the hard work of the Lord's day. When a sermon is kept thus a good while on the anvil, a stroke may be given to it now and then. It comes continually into better shape. Illustrative thoughts suggest themselves through the pastoral engagements of the week. There is another consideration, too, which is not without its weight in recommending this plan. Composition, if it is not pursued under



pressure, has a soothing effect on the mind in the midst of anxious and uneasy thoughts. Thus a sermon in progress is a good companion for the clergyman during the interval between Sunday and Sunday. I would go even further than this, and suggest the practice of having several sermons on hand at the same time. When the mind cannot move freely along one line of thought, it may suddenly acquire great alacrity when set to move upon another line. But I have already been trespassing upon my next topic. What I have just been saying I should wish to be viewed as suggestions subservient to the obtaining of a clear view of our subject on all its sides, so that it may be skilfully and easily turned round in the face of the congregation, and distinctly remembered by them when they quit the church.

4. Fourthly, then, *See to it that your composition is orderly.* Let your sermon have a beginning, a middle, and an end ; and let all its parts be in due proportion. Avoid a long and elaborate introduction. An admirer of the great John Howe, who sometimes fell into this fault, is reported to have said, " Dear, good man, he is so long in laying the cloth, that I lose my appetite, and I begin to think there will be no dinner after all." And in the course of your sermon, don't lead your hearers from the main road into devious by-paths. If you succeed in finding your own way back again, you may not be able to take them back



with you, but may leave them utterly lost. And beware of a rambling, miscellaneous conclusion to your sermon. Remember that the last impression which you make is quite as important as the first.

It is impossible to lay too much stress on this rule of order and organisation in composing. Sermons might be divided into two classes,—which, borrowing an image from Natural History, I will call vertebrate and mollusious. I have heard some discourses from the pulpit which might have been turned round with little disadvantage, and preached from the end almost as well as from the beginning. But sermons of the mollusious kind produce little impression on a congregation: for this simple reason, that it is impossible to attend to them. For purposes of real instruction, sermons must be vertebrate. When you see and admire a horse moving vigorously and easily along the road, you do not see his bones and muscles; but you know that if the bones and muscles were not there, and disposed, too, and fitted in a very orderly manner, there would be nothing to admire. So in a good sermon there must be a skeleton, though the skeleton need not be seen. By all means make use even of abundant drapery, if you please; but be sure that there is a true skeleton underneath. The richest drapery placed upon a mere stick is only a scarecrow. It is quite a mistake to suppose that the poor and the ignorant do

not feel the power of order in that which is addressed to them. They do feel the power, though they may not understand the reason. The present Dean of Carlisle, who has had very large experience, points out most truly, in his preface to some notes on preaching, that by help of systematic arrangement in the sermon they both understand it better and remember it better. Vinet, who, as a philosophic writer on this subject, is of the highest eminence, goes so far as to say: "Order is the characteristic of a true sermon: a sermon cannot exist in any other way: without order one would not know what to call it."

5. A fifth hint is this: *Don't deal in your sermon with an imaginary audience.* Let not your preaching be enveloped in a world of your own; but let it have direct reference to the world which you are addressing. Be in a true and natural relation towards those to whom you preach. I met lately with an illustration which will serve my purpose at this point. It is in Washington Irving's "Sketch Book," in the chapter on "Christmas." He goes to church, and he describes as follows what he heard and saw:—

"The parson gives us a most erudite sermon on the rites and ceremonies of Christmas, and the propriety of observing it not merely as a day of thanksgiving, but of rejoicing, supporting the correctness of his opinion by the earliest usages of the Church, and

enforcing them by the authorities of Theophilus of Cæsarea, St. Cyprian, St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and a cloud more of Saints and Fathers, from whom he made copious quotations. I was a little at a loss to perceive the necessity of such a mighty array of forces to maintain a point which no one present seemed inclined to dispute; but I soon found that the good man had a legion of ideal adversaries to contend with; having, in the course of his researches on the subject of Christmas, got completely embroiled in the sectarian controversies of the Revolution, when the Puritans made such a fierce assault upon the ceremonies of the Church, and poor old Christmas was driven out of the land by a proclamation of Parliament. The worthy parson lived entirely with times past, and knew but little of the present." And the writer continues in the same strain through another page, and in conclusion he adds: "I have seldom known a sermon attended apparently with more immediate effects; for on leaving the church the congregation seemed one and all possessed with the gaiety of spirits so earnestly enjoined by their pastor."

This is not precisely what is likely to happen in our own time, but it is a sufficient and an amusing illustration of a principle of high importance.

6. No one will object to the next principle which I confidently lay down: *Whatever your method is, take the utmost pains.* Talents vary; but all may be

diligent. No one is responsible for the exercise of abilities which do not belong to him ; but every man who undertakes the solemn duty of preaching the Gospel is bound to do his best : and God's blessing may be expected to rest on honest industry. Moreover, it may be laid down as a law of nature, that that which has cost thought is most likely to excite thought in others. The possession of great natural powers of exposition, whether in writing or in utterance, can be no excuse for idleness and neglect. I heard recently, at a nobleman's house in the North of England, an instructive anecdote of the late Bishop Wilberforce. When on a visit there, he had preached a charming sermon to a village congregation ; and some one had been foolish enough to say to him, "I suppose, my lord, you can always preach to a congregation like this without any preparation?" To which he replied, "I was up at six o'clock this morning preparing for this sermon ; and I make it a rule ever, when it is possible, to preach anywhere unless I am saturated with my subject." This phrase—"saturated with my subject"—expresses, I think, very well the condition of mind at which a clergyman should aim before he preaches ; and this general mode of stating the rule leaves great freedom for details, in accordance with variety in the habits and temperaments of preachers.

We put our feet here upon debatable ground in



regard to the best mode of using the work of others in preparing our sermons. If there is to be diligence generally, there must be diligence in study and research, according to our opportunities. We must make use of commentators in order to become thoroughly masters of the meaning of our text. Moreover, when the mind is dull and stagnant, some religious reading may be almost necessary in order to set it in motion. Mr. Spurgeon says: "When a pump has been long disused, and will not work, you pour a little water down, and then it works." It seems to me, however, that the plan of our sermon ought to be our own; and that it is better to read largely, and to seek for useful materials, after the plan is made, than before it is made. If the plan is your own, the sermon is your own in a truer sense, and you are likely to preach it with more heart than if you were to take the framework from some one else, and then fill in the empty spaces. As to disregarding and neglecting what has been said by others on our chosen subject, this would seem to me to argue a culpable self-sufficiency. God has given to many, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and through natural gifts, great wisdom and skill in the unfolding of His truth; and these treasures of exposition, when once in existence, become the perpetual treasure of the Church, and from them rich supplies should be drawn for each generation. Our rule, then,



briefly stated, in regard to the particular point before us, must be this—Use copiously all good materials that are within your reach; but never use them to the exclusion of yourself, or for the dilution of your own painstaking.

7. There will probably be less of general agreement in what I am bold enough to say next; yet it is a maxim, or at least a suggestion, which comes to me recommended by my own observation: *Be not afraid to preach the same thing often.* Each earnest-minded clergyman has some things deeply impressed on his heart, which he longs to say, and is glad to reiterate. Most young men, if they are really in earnest, have had, even before they were ordained, some things in their hearts which they have deeply felt; and these thoughts remain with them afterwards, and fructify within, and are well adapted to be of benefit to their people. And, to descend to a lower level, a sermon once well digested and carefully arranged, after being found to be acceptable, is fitted for useful service again and again. It is wiser to give to our people of our best frequently, than to lay before them inferior food, merely that they may have variety. Moreover, greater freedom is acquired in proportion to our familiarity with the sermon; and again, by preaching the same sermon frequently we gain opportunities for continually improving it. Chalmers was a great preacher, and it is said that he never delivered

a sermon with satisfaction till he delivered it the third time. Few men have ever moved the minds and hearts of men so much as Whitefield, and he preached the same sermons constantly. He considered, I have been told, no one of his discourses to be thoroughly ready for its work till it had been delivered seventeen times.

Of course, in making these remarks, and giving these illustrations, I shall not be misunderstood. I do not forget that Whitefield was an itinerant, while you may be called to preach to a stated congregation, which changes only by the growing up of the young, the departure of the old, and the influx of new inhabitants or new worshippers. Moreover, I bear in mind that there is a repetition of old sermons which is a mark of thorough negligence. A clergyman was asked how he contrived to preach the same sermons continually, and yet never to be found out,—to which he replied, “I always make a point of changing the text : I also alter the first sentence ; and then I have turned the dangerous corner.” I know a parish in one of the dales in Yorkshire, where this process was adopted with singular success. It was a most orthodox parish—not a dissenter was found there. If a dissenter appeared within the frontier, I have understood that he was stoned, and there were plenty of stones on the ground for the purpose. But hardly any one went to church ; and the preacher left in the

pulpit, among the spiders, from Sunday to Sunday, his little volume of printed sermons, with a mark to indicate the last which he had preached.

This is not the kind of repetition which I wish to inculcate. As to any apprehension of being accused of negligence when you do not deserve it, and of repeating your sermons merely to save yourself trouble, I think you may safely leave your life to answer such criticisms. I suppose that you are perfectly frank with your people, and that you practise no deception. They will probably be as glad as you are that your sermons are sometimes repeated. They will feel that it is good for them to hear again what they have listened to already with pleasure and profit.

And even on the ground of abridging toil and severe mental effort, I am inclined to recommend such repetition. I cannot resist the temptation of referring here to one prevalent evil of our day, the mention of which belongs, perhaps, only collaterally to our subject, but in regard to which I have been led to think very seriously. Many of my pupils have entered Holy Orders. I have also been during several years Examining Chaplain to a Bishop. Thus I have had good opportunities for taking an interest in the younger clergy, and feeling a sympathy with them in their difficulties. It is with great regret that I see young men, with very little experience of life, and but scanty attainments in theology, put practically

in charge of large parishes, with the duty of preaching three sermons a week. I am not without some experience in composition; and I know that, with the sick to visit, parish business to organize, schools to superintend, three sermons, worthy to be called sermons, cannot by ordinary men be produced within the week. The result of this state of things is, that preparation for the pulpit either becomes a scramble under difficulty, and thus a bad, loose habit of sermon-writing is formed, or that contraband goods are passed off by young elergymen as their own, and thus the tone of conscience is lowered. \* I plead for mercy to those who are placed in such positions—mercy on the part of absent rectors and vicars—mercy on the part of an exacting, inconsiderate public. One remedy would be found in that honest use of printed sermons in the pulpit, which has in fact the Church's sanction; so that the preacher's own mind may be kept free and fresh for the careful composition of that which is really his own. Another remedy, I venture to think, is to be found in the moral courage which enables a man to repeat frequently what he has well considered. This is not exactly the sense in which St. Paul says—but there is no harm in giving this turn to his words—"To say the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, and for you it is safe."

8. Something was said above concerning the



choice of a subject. This is not always easy, partly because the choice is large, partly because a difficulty is often felt as to the topic which fits the moment best. I would say, then—*Pay careful attention to the order of the Church's services.* Let your sermons, on the whole, follow the lines marked down by the Prayer Book. You are, indeed, a minister of God's Word; but you are also a minister of the Church of England. It is, no doubt, possible to be pedantic in this way, to put yourself in chains, and to do your work in a treadmill, when you always ought to feel reasonably free. Still it is a great advantage to us that our course of teaching is, to a considerable extent, settled for us. Moreover, by letting our thoughts run in this mould, we are in harmony with the general Church, and in contact, so to speak, with the earlier ages, as well as with these times of our own. And certainly we shall not fail, on this method, to have a variety of topics suggested. It is very probable, too, that we shall thus be hindered from neglecting some subjects which we might otherwise neglect or make unduly subordinate. This is a good high road along which to travel with ease and with profit. Keble's lines are admirably true:—

“ Along the Church's central space  
The sacred weeks, with unfelt pace,  
Will bear us on from grace to grace.”

We must recollect, too, that the people, when they



come to church, are put into a certain attitude by the Prayer Book. Their minds are ready to receive teaching of a certain kind. They know already, more or less, the Collect, the Epistle and Gospel, the Lessons and the Psalms. When a man desires to select his seed judiciously, he will have some regard to the soil.

9. I now reach my ninth suggestion, which is this : *Deal fairly with your text.* Be sure you know, in the first place, what it really means. This of course points, as I have already said, to diligent and careful study.

When in Lent you preach on the words, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every* word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"—do not make this to indicate a contrast between bodily food and spiritual food, with a preference given, of course, to the latter, whereas the text points to God's power of taking care of us by extraordinary means, when ordinary means fail. When you quote from the Epistle to the Romans St. Paul's words, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," do not make them the groundwork of a defence of the XIIIth Article, concerning "Works done before Justification;" whereas the words simply remind us of the practical, but most solemn truth, that what we do without an honest belief that it is right, is (to us) really wrong. When you quote the 112th Psalm to this effect—"He hath

given to the poor: he hath scattered abroad: his righteousness endureth for ever," do not apply these words to Almighty God, whereas they refer to the righteous and large-hearted man, whose power of beneficence grows, under God's blessing, with its exercise.

This illustrates the truth that, in order to be fair to a text, we must have very careful regard to the context. And this, again, requires thoughtful study and close attention. I do not say that there ought to be no sermons on special subjects, where the text is merely a motto, and only prefixed because of the very proper rule that every sermon must have a text. I am speaking of those sermons which are expositions of Holy Scripture: and most of our sermons must be of this character. God will bless His own Word; but not if we make it to mean something different from that which it was intended to mean.

And one more remark I venture to make on this special topic. Be not too anxious in one discourse to balance and reconcile truths which are apparently conflicting. Set forth boldly the truth which you have in hand; and on some other occasion set forth with equal boldness the correlative truth. This is part of what I term dealing fairly with your text. Christianity is not a collection of compromises, but rather a system of truths revealed so far as it is necessary for us to know them—the perfect recon-

ciliation of these truths being in the mind of God, while a sufficient reconciliation of them, for the present, is in the heart of the believer.

10. Once more, *make much of the study of character.* You address a congregation. That is true. But it is true in a still more important sense, that you address each person in that congregation. Souls are saved one by one. Each person now before you has his own separate biography. The recollection of this will give point to your remarks, will almost instinctively secure variety in their adaptation, and will tend to bring your words home to separate consciences.

The Bible itself furnishes to us a guiding hint in this respect. To a very large extent it is made up of biography. What a large space is filled in the Old Testament by patriarchs, kings, and prophets! What a large space in the New Testament by St. Paul! The Bible, the best of all books in everything that relates to human conduct, is the best also in this respect—that it furnishes to us the best studies of character. Some of the men, too, in the Bible—such as Jacob, for instance, or Pilate—are in their weaknesses and faults singularly like men we have known. Even the parables, we may say, both with reverence and truth, are studies of character.

This train of thought leads us to see in a very serious light the importance of diligent and discriminating pastoral work. Character must be studied in

detail; and if we are to minister effectually to our people, we must know them. It will perhaps be said that these remarks are not applicable to our great town parishes, where the weight of general population is so crushing, that the separate elements of it cannot be personally known. And there is truth in this criticism. But there is disadvantage, too, in the small country parish. If we preach on a particular kind of character, perhaps the man or the woman whom it fits is before us, known by ourselves and by every one who is present. It is not my business to compare one kind of parish with another. I am only laying down a general principle, which ought always to be kept in view. If we try to study human character, we shall continually be learning something new, and something good for our people. I remember a curious illustration. When I was in charge of a large parish in the Fens, I preached, during the week-days in Lent, a course of short sermons on common faults; and on one of these days I preached upon Gossip. An old woman, when the service was over, said to her neighbours, with vehement displeasure, as she went out of the church, "I wish he'd mind his own business." It was evident that I had interfered with her business. I think this little parochial anecdote, if it is closely considered, will be found to be as instructive as it is entertaining.

II. My last point is kindred to the preceding, but



it takes us at once to very serious ground. *Foster in your heart a spirit of sympathy.* I have just been speaking of the study of human life in its separate elements. Here I am referring rather to our fellow-feeling with humanity at large. If we are to be persuasive preachers, we must be imbued with a feeling of this kind, characterized by both tenderness and breadth. In the New Testament two preachers stand before us and plead with mankind. One, our Blessed Redeemer, is at the height of all perfection; the other, St. Paul, is more nearly on a level with ourselves. Both of them exercised persuasive power through sympathy. The author of "*Ecce Deus*," in a short preface to some recent notes on sermons, speaks of the power of the sympathy of Christ. He remarks most truly that where it is said that "the common people heard Him gladly," the allusion is not to what we call the lower classes, as opposed to the higher; and when we look at the original Greek, we see that we are misled in our apprehension of this passage by our popular use of the word "common." The preaching of Christ "touched the common heart of the world; and in *His* voice was a tone which was absent from all other speech." And such, on a ground infinitely lower, and yet far above ourselves, was the sympathy of St. Paul. I will give two illustrations. There is a beautiful passage in one of Newman's sermons, in

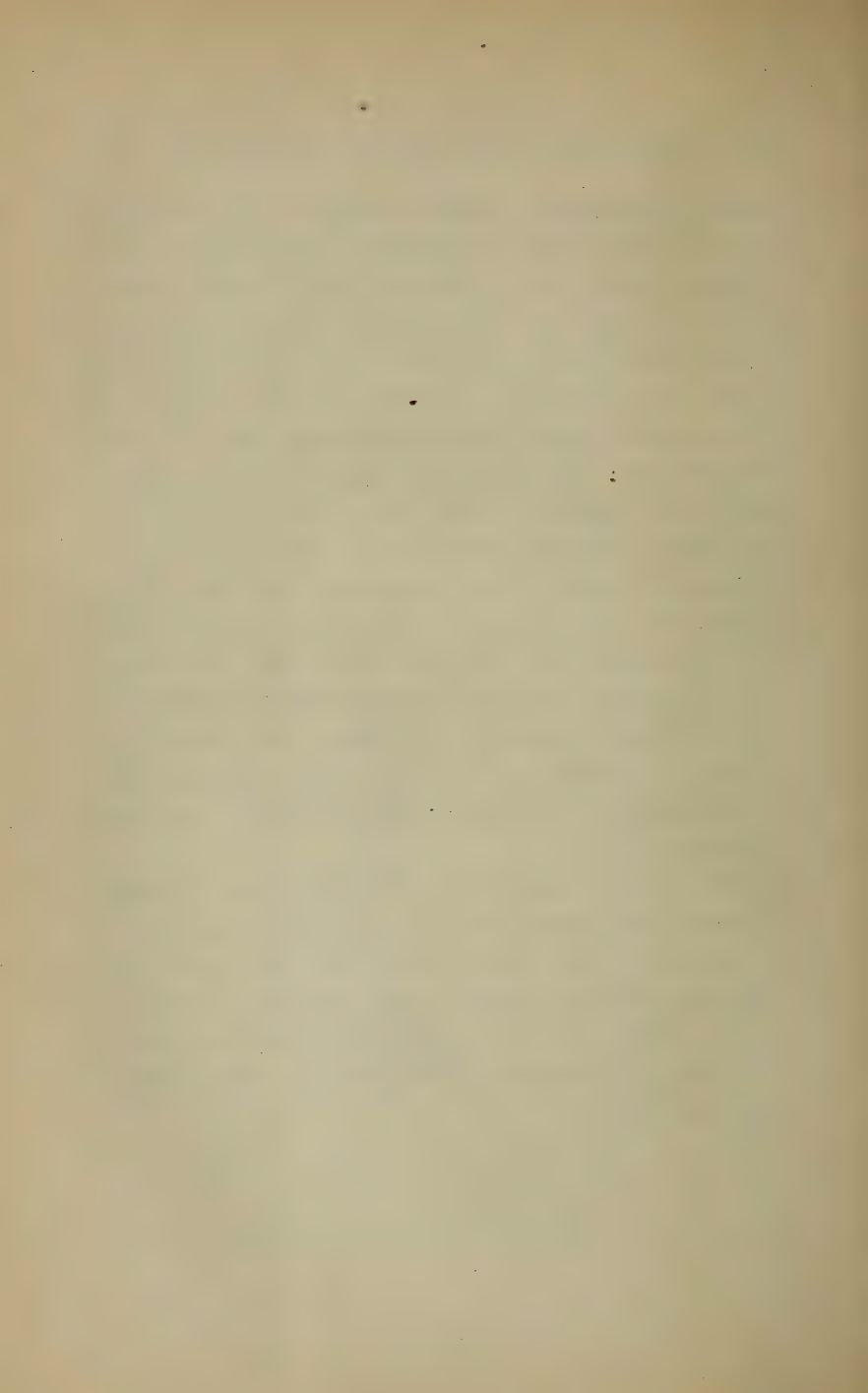


which he points out the fellow-feeling of the great apostle with the poor heathens of Lystra, to whom he speaks of God's giving them "rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." The other instance is that passage where St. Paul gives advice to his friend Timothy concerning his health, in the midst of lofty exhortations concerning religious doctrine and religious duty. These examples refer to what may be termed external sympathy. But they are all the more forcible on that account. The sympathy of Christ's minister with his people ought to be universal. For the deeper sympathy self-knowledge is requisite. Each man has the germs of every fault within him, the indications of every weakness, the need of supernatural help on every side. This points to close and frequent self-examination. In proportion as we can be consciously in contact with all mankind, will our ministry be persuasive. Sympathy will give tone and colour to everything else. Cecil says that "truth and sympathy are the soul of an efficient ministry;" and it is a golden saying. There must be truth, otherwise sympathy is a mere human emotion; there must be sympathy, otherwise the truth of the Gospel itself is cold and unattractive.

Let me now recapitulate the hints which, taught by experience, I have ventured to bring forward. After leaving open various questions that may be

raised, as between written sermons and extempore sermons, or between long sermons and short sermons, I have asked you to consider the following suggestions :—(1) Go into the pulpit and preach as though you intended to be listened to ; (2) Deal with your voice on the principles of common sense ; (3) Present your subject clearly in its separation from all other subjects ; (4) See that your composition is an organic and well-organised whole ; (5) Don't preach to an imaginary world, but to the real world in which you live ; (6) Whatever your method is, take the utmost pains with your work ; (7) Be not too much afraid of repeating often what you have well considered ; (8) Pay careful attention to the order suggested by the Church's services ; (9) Deal fairly with your text ; (10) Make much of the study of character ; (11) Foster in yourself the spirit of thoughtful sympathy.

These are eleven points. If I am to add a twelfth, I will borrow one from Aristotle, who says in his "Rhetoric" that your power of persuasion will depend on the opinion your hearers entertain of you. This, translated into Christian language, is St. Paul's injunction : "Take heed to *thyself* and to the doctrine."



On the Emotions in Preaching.

BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE AND MOST REVEREND WILLIAM  
THOMSON, D.D., LORD ARCHBISHOP OF YORK.





#### IV.

##### *ON THE EMOTIONS IN PREACHING.*

A SERMON is a discourse on God, and duty, and heaven, and hell. It is the work of one who has made these high subjects his own study, and whose heart has felt the comfort and joy and fear that belong to them. Those whom he addresses are to learn of him the things that belong to their peace and to eternal life. Under these conditions the sermon must, one would suppose beforehand, be solemn and affecting, loving and urgent, full of persuasion, warning, and rebuke. Not one sentence should go forth without doing its share of persuasion. Every one should bear witness to the presence of a speaker earnestly desirous of saving some soul from death, or of sowing in some heart the germs of truth and peace. For that type of sermon which treats of these great interests in tame and indifferent tones there would seem to be no place under conditions such as these. We are brought by the text, perhaps, to the bier of the widow's son at Nain ; and there we hear with amazement that "the

miracles of our Lord divide themselves naturally into three classes ;” and for ten minutes out of twenty-five we are occupied in dividing miracles into classes, leaving the widow’s tears to dry on her cheeks, and the spectacle of a Divine compassion to await our inspection when our frigid classification shall be complete. In the English pulpit, filled by a race far more disposed by temperament to disguise an emotion that it feels than to assume one of which it is insensible, the fault of speaking in a cold indifferent tone about the subjects that are most full of the materials of emotion is likely to prevail ; at present it seems to frustrate the preaching of many a young man, whose heart is in his work, and whose life is shaped by his convictions. There is a wall of crystal between him and his hearers ; some light passes through it, but hardly any heat.

A sermon is a proclamation of the kingdom of heaven to sinful men, who though sinful are capable of being moved by hopes of deliverance and by an example of perfection. Such matter requires a certain elevation of style and feeling. A tame and spiritless discourse, coldly uttered, as if the Word of Life were as dull as last year’s almanack, as formal as the publication of banns, may even do positive harm, coming after lofty psalms and impressive lessons and solemn prayers, and abate the glow of emotion which these may have kindled. We do not want a sermon

that shall break the bruised reed of compunction, or quench the smoking flax of divine love in the heart. The conception of a sermon is quite opposite to this. Alone of the parts of the Church Services it belongs to the present time. Its function is to bring their venerable truths into immediate contact with the understanding, the feelings, and the will of those who are present. It turns the truths of history into living personal lessons. The words, "Thou art the man," strike like a dart into our hearts, as once into the heart of the prophet king. A certain elevation of thought, feeling, and utterance befits such a purpose. The message comes from God, and concerns the eternal interests of those who receive it. Need one say more to lift the subject into a position of unique importance, and to claim for it the highest treatment?

I beg to offer a few hints on the feelings evoked by preaching, and on the manner of evoking them, though I am but a learner myself.

1. In most cases we should take care that the preliminary exposition of the text should be brief, compact, and strictly relevant to what follows. The mistake of squandering the moments of best attention of our hearers in preliminary remarks is often made by very young preachers, from a fear that the material at command may run short. When the text has shown us Lazarus at the rich man's gate, a tame dissertation on kinds of parables is

hard to pardon. When the shadows of the olives of Gethsemane are closing over us, a learned discussion on Gospel harmony is enough to wound our sense of fitness. If the text requires a few remarks to make its meaning clear, and to set it in the light of its proper context, let all that is actually needed be said, as by one who must clear the ground, and then pass upward to the heights of his subject. Sometimes it would be an advantage after the sermon is written to return to the exordium in order to prune away that which is needless, and to give it life and vigour by the process.

2. We are now in mid career, striving to gain souls for Christ, to quicken in them the spark of divine life, and to set them thirsting after perfection in holiness. Our foe on the right hand is pretension, and on the left hand "commonplace." Equally fatal it seems to be to call out the comment that the preacher is showing of what eloquence he is capable, or that he falls below his subject into "bald disjointed chat." The preacher, says Marhaineke, "should strive for nothing more than this,—to make his personal character in no way injurious to the cause which he wishes to promote; to divest himself of everything which can offend the tastes or prejudices of his people, whatever may be the degree of their education; and also, yielding to the noble influence of his theme, to

sink himself, when it is possible, entirely out of sight under the magnificence and irresistible power of the truth which he proclaims."\* But, on the other side, every sentence should have the impress of the subject. "The style," says Buffon, "is the man," and the man now speaking has in his heart the welfare of souls. His words must be suitable to such a purpose. Cold and tame expressions will persuade the hearers that the man is not kindled by the fire of his message; florid and affected sentences will suggest that he puts himself above his subject, and seeks his own glory. Between these two perils, the mode of expression which the preacher will aim at is that subdued style which, while it never sinks into mere commonplace, allows of occasional ornament, and of rising to a higher level of eloquence when the points that excite intense interest require it. Such a style will be quite simple, but it will never cease to be oratorical. "Prose is words in their right places, and poetry the best words in the best places;" so says Coleridge, and I am inclined to vindicate for oratory its claim to the latter description. A word used with singular felicity; the frequent employment of metaphorical words; the interwoven phrases of Holy Scripture, which, however high and poetical, will not seem out of place on the sober background of a seemingly

\* Quoted in Schott, *Homiletik*.



style; the allusion to common incidents of the market and the newspaper, which are saved from vulgarity by a few slight touches of expression, (and they ought to be few and slight,)—these work in easily with a style of speaking, the general level of which is removed from triteness and vulgarity by a few well-marked steps, and which yet never descends from the regions of oratory. The sermon is in this respect like the church in which it is delivered; it must have its appropriate furniture and ornament in order to preserve the feeling of reverence: we could not bear to recognise the household basin in the font, nor the carpet of our sea-side lodgings on the floor. A style somewhat raised above the common level denotes a strain of thought and feeling somewhat raised. And the first advance is gained in subduing the feelings of the hearers, when the preacher has brought them into the belief that he himself is impressed with the dignity of his subject, and approaches it with awe and reverence, as one who treads on holy ground.

It is customary to say that the style of the orator must never pass into that of the poet. There is some truth in this; but it is less applicable to preaching than to any other style of oratory, because the books out of which we have to teach are in great part works of the highest strain of poetry. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so

panteth my soul for Thee, O God" (Psalm xlii. 1). "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing" (Isa. lv. 12). A discourse which derives some of its colour from expressions like these may and will lose sight from time to time of the line that separates prose from poetry; and the most fastidious taste will not be offended.

The distinction of style, then, for which I am pleading here, will be gained by an apt use of words, by occasional ornament, by a colouring of Scriptural thought and expressions, and, above all, by the evidence of a purpose not to spend force upon trivial points, but to move always forward toward the impression that we desire to make.

But whilst careful study of style will be of the greatest use to those who, deeply impressed with the importance of their office, and with love for God and love for souls, are yet unable to give adequate expression to their feelings, and from coldness of manner, or shyness, or want of imagination fail to do justice to their own purpose, I must say that without the purpose of heart no amount of study, no beauty of style, will make a successful preacher. The hollowness of artificial preaching will be detected by all religious minds, and will repel them. An audience may still be kept together, of those who admire fine language, or gorgeous imagery, or fertility of illustration. But to touch

souls, a soul that is itself touched by God's love is the most powerful agent. To plead God's cause the preacher must have God's voice speaking to his own heart.

Out of these two factors, the inward love and the power of expressing it, comes that which has been termed unction—so difficult to define—so potent to persuade: which one writer describes as “the affecting, penetrating, interesting manner, flowing from a strong sensibility of heart in the preacher to the importance of the truths which he delivers, and an earnest desire that they should make a full impression on the heart of his hearers.” This quality of a sermon “produces its effect without awakening our consciousness of its presence. We feel, we perceive, that we are moved: we can hardly assign a reason why.”

Perhaps it hardly suits our limits to give examples of the treatment which produces this kind of impression; yet one or two may be permitted. Chrysostom is to speak of the irregular attendance of Christians at the services. He begins thus: “You are all to-day cheerful, and I alone am dejected; for when I look over this spiritual sea, and behold this boundless wealth of the Church, and then consider that as soon as the festival is over this multitude will start away from us, I am pierced with grief that the Church, having brought forth so

many children, cannot enjoy them at each assembling, but only at a festival. How great would be the spiritual exultation, how great the joy, how great the glory of God, how great the spiritual feast, if on each occasion of assembling we could see the enclosures of the Church thus filled!"\* This is very different from a cold remark upon the fluctuations of the congregation—from a dry suggestion that church-going is a duty. The very first words place the preacher in a true relation to his hearers, as a shepherd of souls, yearning for his Master's sake to gather them in, and keep them safe together. This opening is conceived in the spirit of the Master's own words, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life" (John v. 40).

Again, Massillon's sermon on "the Small Number of the Elect" is a fine example of this kind. He begins by declining to discuss the abstract doctrine that few persons are saved. This could be proved easily from Scripture. "But what would it serve to limit the fruits of this instruction to the single point of setting forth how few persons will be saved? I should make the danger known without instructing you how to avoid it. I should show you, with the prophet, the sword of the wrath of God suspended over your heads, without assisting you to escape the threatened blow: I should alarm,

\* Sermon on Baptism of Christ, ii. 433.



but not instruct the sinner. . . . I wish not, in naming to you the causes which render salvation so rare, to make you generally conclude that few will be saved, but to bring you to ask yourselves if, living as you live, *you* can hope to be saved. Who am I? What am I doing for heaven? And what can be my hopes in eternity? I propose no other order in a matter of such importance. What are the causes which render salvation so rare?" Here, too, the hearers are at once lifted out of the region of mere instruction into that of love. From the first word of that remarkable discourse to the very last, the preacher is seeking the flock, to save them; and the background of every sentence is that God is love, that the speaker is touched by some of that Divine love, and that for the hearers outside the light of that love there can be no life, no hope.

Cicero says of Callidius, that of the three parts of which eloquence consists, instructing and delighting and moving, he enjoyed the power of the first two in an eminent degree, but was quite wanting in the last and most important—that of touching and exciting the minds of his hearers. This verdict applied to a Christian preacher would be the severest condemnation. To speak of heaven and hell, of God, of sin, of remorse and penitence, without inspiring emotion of any kind, would be a miserable exercise of the



mind. Array every precept of Holy Scripture that belongs to your subject, and support them with every scriptural example ; exhaust, if possible, all the ornaments of composition to decorate your sermon ; yet if from first to last there is no unction, if you are not carried forth out of yourself towards those souls—so dear to Christ—who are looking up to you for spiritual food, what gain is there to your Master or to you ? Many a good man amongst us lies under the reproach of Callidius, that he seems to aim at instruction and at pleasing, without attempting to awaken and rouse his people. But I fear we must go a step farther, and must say that the Christian preacher cannot stand still in the position of Callidius. If we cannot move our hearers, I do not say to tears or groanings, but to any holy love, to any noble endeavour, we shall not long be able to instruct them or delight them. The hungering soul, failing of food, will no longer expect it from us ; and will turn with weariness even from the truest aphorism or the aptest figure of speech. An eminent preacher lately taken from us, on being told that a somewhat frigid speaker “always spoke good sense,” replied, “But I cannot bear good sense when it is delivered to me in that form.” Many a modern hearer would be obliged to admit that the very texts of Holy Scripture cited in the pulpit had become a weariness to him, from the dulness of the setting in which they were presented.

And what a failure and defeat, to ascend into that holy place to declare God's law, yet so to handle it that the fire and the thunder exceeding loud which belonged to its origin are all forgotten, and to reduce it in our feeble hands to a position of less interest than a nurse's tale or the petty records of the day's journal! A pulpit is no place for dissertations, nor for dramatic display. It is a place for instruction, indeed, for pleasure and delight; but the primary condition is that a sermon should bear about it the stamp of its great purpose, to teach the sinful how to love God, and those who have already repented how to love Him more. We hear much now about parochial missions; and I, like others, have seen and thankfully acknowledge their beneficial effects. But does not one great part of their success arise from this, that they call men to repent more directly and urgently than the present fashion of preaching has allowed? And if so, might we not turn our own regular ministrations into a mission, by preaching every Sunday Christ's great love and man's great need? It has been observed more than once, that after a preacher has learnt to conduct missions, his ordinary style of preaching is much improved. He has acquired directness, emotion, purpose, *love*. And if, as in many cases, the love is really there, locked up in the preacher's heart by the long frost of shyness and reserve, there is the more reason that it should

get forth ; there is the more occasion to pray for the warm beams of the Spirit of God to thaw the icy barrier, and let the stream of love flow free.

3. Every part, then, of a sermon is to be penetrated by emotion, by sober, real, chastened emotion. There is no need to observe that what is usually called emotion could not be sustained or tolerated throughout the whole of a long sermon ; but the level of the discourse must be such that from it the heights of feeling and of passion may be easily and naturally reached. Reverence for God, love for souls, and a deep sense of his own responsible position, are feelings that attend the preacher throughout his course. The emotion on which the preacher must rely is that mild beneficent warmth of love that glows throughout the whole discourse, rather than the more passionate utterances on which he may venture only when the subject strictly warrants them. There is some risk when we attempt to be pathetic that we may excite a pity, not for our subject, but for ourselves (*miserationem non rei sed sui excitant*). The greatest caution and judgment are required for dealing with the passions of an audience ; and a young preacher may well be pardoned—may be praised—who declines to attempt these higher flights until he has acquired a knowledge of the human heart and the confidence that experience alone can give. The passions that belong to preaching are

chiefly these,—fear, hope, love, zeal, compassion, reverence. Do not suppose that I am about to adventure an essay on each. I only offer a few hints, such as—

(1.) Do not wear out the effect of the terror of God's wrath by frequent recourse to the minatory style of preaching. Love will draw when fear will not drive. We must show faithfully that there is a hell as well as a heaven; but the power of the Gospel lies in its hopes and in its love. When you do speak of the terrors of Divine wrath, let it be so that men may see how much they have awed you, how you shrink from proclaiming them without adding motives of love to diminish their scathing power. A modern preacher, about to quote God's sentence on the judgment day against the wicked, stops short, and says, "Depart and flee for your life; it is not too late."\* A French preacher, bidding farewell to his congregation after a long ministry in an evil time, deploras the growth of infidelity and the corruptions of life which he has been predicting with warning voice as from the mountain-top. "All is lost—religion, morals, the State. You only regarded my prophecies as the exaggeration of an extravagant zeal; and even I did not count on their being accomplished so early. . . . What then remains for us to predict as we descend at

\* Wolfe.



last from the mountain? We speak it even with groans . . . . the vengeance of God. Dearest brethren, what a heritage we leave you! O that we could turn it away by any vows and prayers of ours!"\* For another and more forcible example I would fain make myself indebted to Fénélon. It is from a sermon on the propagation of the Gospel, preached when he was only thirty-four years old. After surveying the progress of Christianity in the world, he returns to regard that which calls itself Christianity in France in the year 1685, when he is preaching. Things were not much better with *us* at that most shameful time of our history. "Cowardly and unworthy Christians! through you Christianity is misunderstood and despised; through you the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles; you are a mere stone of stumbling at the gate of the house of God, to trip up those who come to seek Jesus Christ. . . . Fashion has become the tyrannical law to which all others are sacrificed. The last duty is that of paying one's debts. Preachers dare no longer plead for the poor in presence of a throng of creditors, whose clamorous demands reach the very sky. Thus justice puts charity to silence; and justice herself is refused a hearing. . . . Daily one invents new necessities to sanction passions the most odious.

\* The Abbé Poulle.



That which forty years ago would have been a scandalous ostentation in those of the highest position, has become seemly and suitable even for the middle class. Detestable refinement of the present day! Misery and luxury increase with equal steps; men are profuse of their own wealth, and they covet that of others. Is this Christianity? Let us depart at once into some other land, where we shall be no longer obliged to behold such disciples of Jesus Christ. O Christian faith, avenge thyself. Leave an eternal night upon the face of this earth, covered with a deluge of iniquities. Great God! what do I see? where do we stand? The day of ruin approaches. The last days hasten on. What shall I say to Thee, O Lord? Remember our misery and Thy great mercy." You can imagine how an audience, already taken captive by the powerful eloquence of the early part of the discourse, bent under the pitiless storm of this rebuke; how it became necessary, so to speak, to send some words of hope down into the depths of that humiliation: "Remember our misery and Thy great mercy."

(2.) These appeals to shame and to fear ought indeed always to be the prelude to a message of hope. You may safely say to yourself that every man in your congregation, whose mind is not already stayed upon God, has within him, more

or less deeply seated, a desire and yearning for something better than he has got. And if you did say that to yourself, and lay it down as the condition of all your preaching, never for a moment to be forgotten, we should have fewer aimless sermons, fewer of those efforts to while away an inevitable half-hour in good talk, which shall pass smoothly with flattering touch over the sleek skin of easy consciences, and be in no danger of ruffling in the wrong direction the leonine and ursine hides of the wicked. Our work is peace on earth to man, but a real peace, and not a slumber. Our work is to open to man a vista of holiness and happiness which no earthly career can offer him. Our aim is to bring man back to that Master whom he has left, and for whose service he has ever since been longing even more than he knew. This is the reason that men gather round the pulpit still: men need to be told of their want. They do not come to hear the highest arguments; masterpieces of argument they have at home upon their shelves. Nor do they come expecting from you the force of a Demosthenes or the pathos of a Massillon. They want you to tell them of the more excellent way. They want to catch again the spirit of some hymn that their mother taught them, and to have renewed the mood of an old penitence or of a scrupulous fear of some vice, with whose face they have since

become familiar. Look upon them, with their hunger and their thirst, all the more touching if they are in a measure unconscious. Give them the hope that they require. Tell them the meaning of the life of Jesus—that He suffered that we might cease from sin.\* Repeat His message to them that labour and are heavy-laden; there is that in the conscience of your people that will give a point to your teaching. “How long,” says Augustine, “will you seek pleasures that cannot give you happiness? When will you terminate your restlessness by ceasing from your crimes? What more do you need to undeceive you as to the world, beyond the experience that you have in yourself of the weariness and the misery that you feel in serving it? Say whether it is more sweet to give yourself to Me, and whether I am able to satisfy the soul that possesses Me.”

(3.) “Appeals to compassion should be brief,” it has been said; “for nothing dries more quickly than a tear.”† And a great master of rhetoric warns us not to attempt the pathetic kind of oratory, unless we are conscious of great powers.‡ It is certain that a failure in an attempt to move to tears is more than a mere failure; it chills and even disgusts. At the same time, every preacher

\* 1 Peter iv. 1, 2.

† Cicero, *Ad Her.* ii. 31.

‡ Quint. vi. 1.

must attempt at times to appeal to the compassion of his people. He is the appointed pleader for the needy, the sick, for them that sit in darkness; and he must do his best for these unhappy clients. But he must not think it a first condition to assume a pathetic manner. There need not be a tear in his eye, nor even what the French call "tears in the voice." Anything like a forced manner, in subjects of this kind, would be fatal. Many of us know how painful is that lachrymose tone which sometimes becomes habitual to a preacher. The great point for a young preacher is to let his subject, rather than his manner, work on the feelings. Let any one read the story of Joseph receiving his brethren in Egypt, and let him consider the effect upon that story that would be produced by comments and ornaments of a rhetorician; he will then admit that a simple narrative of facts may make the highest eloquence. A few minute touches in a picture of misery and sorrow will often be enough to give a fresh impression to the hearers of the sorrow to which they are hardened by custom, and will open their hearts to compassion once more. And there is no presumption and no great risk in describing; the youngest preacher may attempt it. Force the one part of mankind to learn how the other part lives and suffers, and you have the command of



the feelings of the more fortunate. Ignorance is the cause of much of the hardness of men. Let us see the interior of the poor man's squalid room, where a whole family lives and works, suffers and squabbles. The condition of children in our factories some time ago, white slaves and heathen-Christians, needed but to be stated to draw out burning tears. The state of Africa to this hour, where men have shown how nearly they could realize, by vice and mutual murder, an earthly hell; the devastation made by the curse of drink, which threatens the utter ruin of our people: these speak to us best through facts, well-chosen and simply told. We may never be able to reach the level of Augustine exhorting the people of Hippo to give up the abuses which defiled their solemn feasts, nor that of Massillon in his famous sermon on the famine; but we are all human, and can feel a human interest in other men that suffer, and even the more timid and less eloquent of us may point to the chains and wounds of our brethren, and may show that we feel for sorrows such as theirs. But we can best study pathos at the foot of the cross of Christ. "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow" (Lam. i. 12). There is none like it. Here contemplate the mystery of suffering. "Behold the man " It is only a crown of thorns that He



wears ; but with that crown comes to Him a power that the heavenly crown which He bore before His humiliation did not confer. "In the heavenly crown," says Krummacher, "He could say nothing else to a Magdalen, or publican, or a paralytic, than 'Depart from me.' But in His crown of thorns it is in His power to say to those guilty souls, 'Go in peace ; your sins are forgiven you.'" Great mystery indeed ! Out of suffering springs a fountain of relief for suffering, and sorrow and wretchedness are hallowed for evermore to every minister of the suffering Lord.

One fear has haunted me throughout the preparation of this paper—lest I should seem, in treating of the mechanism and adornment of the sermon, to put too much in the background the great essentials of a sermon, the trust in God, and the love of souls, that should rule in the preacher's heart. I have ventured to think that good men sometimes preach bad sermons, but I do not forget that bad men will never preach good ones. Without real love of God and man, the congregation will at last discover that the warmth that perhaps for a moment deceived them is but the crackling of thorns under the pot, and the ornaments of speech are but as a wreath of artificial flowers round the livid face of a corpse. "The only source of unction in preaching," it has been well said, "is the spirit of regeneration and of grace. It is a gift that is

spent and lost, unless we renew this sacred fire, which must always be kept burning : and that which preserves it is the cross within the soul—self-denial, prayer, and penitence.”\*

For a race of great preachers we should have to seek in vain in this Church and generation. But we thank Almighty God that there are many whose teaching is eagerly received by large congregations ; and, now as ever, the true success is not to the eloquent and poetical preacher, but to him who shows the true unction from above, and whose words, often the simplest and least adorned, bear on them no mark of distinction but this—that they are intended to win souls for Christ.

\* Dutoit Membrini, in Vinet, p. 199.

# What Constitutes a Plain Sermon?

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND HARVEY GOODWIN, D.D., LORD  
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## V.

### WHAT CONSTITUTES A PLAIN SERMON?

WHEN a clergyman stands up in a pulpit for the purpose of preaching a sermon, there is one thing which, beyond all others, he must try to do—namely, to convey the thoughts which are in his own mind to the minds of those who listen.

I shall assume that the clergyman has some thoughts, that these thoughts are good, and such as his great Master would approve; I shall assume, moreover, that he has an earnest desire to convey those thoughts to his people, that he wishes to *preach*, not to *prate*, and that he has a sufficient sense of the importance of the office which he holds and of the Gospel message which he has to convey; and, once more, I shall assume that his congregations are of that mixed kind which is most common, having only a few hearers well educated, a good many badly educated, and a residuum not educated at all, with the usual infusion of carelessness and worldliness, and also the hopeful element of earnestness and devotion in a heart here and a



heart there. I shall make these assumptions, because I wish to make it clear what the ground is upon which I am going to build; and assuming thus a clergyman of the right sort, and a congregation of the ordinary kind, I say that what he has to do is to convey his thoughts to them—for this is the very end and purpose of a sermon; and in order that the sermon may be an effective vehicle of all his thoughts, it must be above all things *plain*. Hence the question arises, which I have undertaken to try to answer,—*What constitutes a Plain Sermon?*

There is a difficulty in ascertaining the extent to which any given sermon has proved itself to be really plain, arising from this circumstance—namely, that the clergyman has generally no opportunity of asking his people that question which our Lord once put to His disciples, “Have ye understood all these things?” The sermon is preached, and the people go home, and as a general rule the clergyman has no means of knowing whether the thoughts which he wished to convey were really conveyed. I have myself been sometimes surprised to discover that expositions, which I had believed to be clear and plain, not only did not convey the meaning intended, but to some at least of my people, and those not the least intelligent, conveyed the exact opposite of that which I had intended to convey. A clergyman therefore has to bear in mind that in

this respect he works very much in the dark ; and herein consists the difference between preaching and catechizing, and the great superiority of the latter, where it may be had. It would be an excellent improvement upon the ordinary pulpit practice, if the clergyman could do that which I have heard Indian missionaries speak of as not unusual in native congregations—stop suddenly after some sentence in a sermon, and ask some one to explain what has just been said. I fear, however, there are few English congregations in which this would be possible. The difficulty of carrying away the chief drift and meaning of an address of (say) half an hour long, which has been delivered continuously, and it may be rapidly, is very great under any circumstances. Tutors and professors at the Universities thoroughly well know this ; and a good teacher teaches very much by questions and examinations ; and no one can be aware how imperfect and shallow and confused his knowledge upon any subject, on which he has heard a lecture, or perhaps read a book, really is, till he tries to reproduce his knowledge.

But I need not pursue these remarks any further. My purpose in making them is to impress as forcibly as I may, at the very outset of my lecture, the extreme importance of making a sermon *plain* ; concerning other qualities there may be differences

of opinion: some may like a sermon to be short, some to be long; some may prefer a written sermon, some an unwritten, or (as is sometimes called) an extempore sermon; some may like one style of delivery, and some another; some may take pleasure in what may be called doctrinal sermons, and some in those which are more emphatically practical; but there is one point on which all will agree—namely, that a sermon must be *plain*; and by *plain* I would be understood to mean that which has already been offered as a definition of the word—namely, that the sermon shall be such as will convey to the minds of the congregation the thoughts which are in the mind of the preacher. I come, then, now to the question proposed, *What constitutes a Plain Sermon?*

I shall endeavour to answer this question under a number of different heads, but I shall not tell you how many. I myself know how many there will be, but I do not intend to let you into the secret; and this partly in order that I may take occasion by the way to give a hint to young sermon-writers concerning *heads*—namely, that it is not always wise to explain how many and what your heads will be. Paley, I think, somewhere says that a preacher who describes beforehand all that he is going to do, is like a guide who, in commencing a walk, explains to his party all the difficulties of the road. Let him only start and guide his party well, and the

whole excursion will seem pleasant; whereas, if the journey be described too carefully in the first instance, the party, or at least some of them, may feel a sense of weariness creeping over them almost before the start is made. For this reason, then, I shall not reveal to you of how many heads my paper will consist. Let it suffice for the present that my first head shall be—

### I. *Plain Words.*

Words are to a sermon, or, indeed, to any kind of speech, what bricks or stones are to a house: they are the material of which it is constructed; and in order that a sermon may be a plain sermon, it must above all things be composed of *plain words*.

What are plain words? They are, according to the definition which I have already endeavoured to attach to the adjective *plain*, words which convey to the mind of the person addressed the thought which is in the mind of the speaker. Hence it does not follow that a word is a really plain word, because it happens to be common or because it happens to be Saxon; for example, most church-going people would understand what was meant by an *edifying* sermon, and many of them would be a little surprised by hearing the phrase a *building-up* sermon; and yet *edify* is Latin, and *build up* is Saxon. The fact is, that what may be called technical words (and the word *edify* belongs to this class) are far



more comprehensive and full of meaning than more common words, provided only that they are understood. Indeed, some of the more abstruse doctrines of the faith, like the propositions of science, can only be clearly enunciated in technical terms, and these terms, which convey the intended meaning to the initiated, are dark as night to those who have not mastered them.

Let me illustrate this point, which is one of much importance, by turning for a moment from divinity to mathematics. I take a volume of Cambridge examination papers, and I pick out at random such questions as these:—

Prove that corresponding to a point of maximum or minimum curvature in any curve there is a cusp in the evolute.

Find the equation of the path of a projectile *in vacuo*.

Describe the phenomena of Newton's rings, and show how they may be accounted for on the theory of interferences.

Now, the peculiarity of such pieces of English is this—that, as the vehicle of thought between the examiner and the examinee, they are perfect; the examiner knows perfectly what he means to propound, and the examinee (unless he is destined to be plucked) knows precisely what it is that has been propounded; but, on the other hand, to those



who have not studied the subjects to which the questions relate, the language is so much gibberish. To say that you could not alter English of this kind with advantage, is to say but little ; what is true is this—that you could not, in any altered form of words, make your meaning intelligible at all. The words *curvature*, *cusp*, *evolute*, *equation*, *projectile*, *Newton's rings*, *interferences*, each and all convey a definite meaning, and carry in a compact form a whole volume of definitions and postulates and axioms and geometrical and physical investigations ; and, apart from words like these, scientific discussions would be impossible.

That which I have thus illustrated by reference to the case of mathematical science, is true in the case of divinity ; and what the preacher has to ask is, I think, not so much whether a given word be Saxon, or Latin, or Greek, or what not, but whether it is a vehicle to the mind of his people of the thought which it conveys to him. A technical word understood is a very powerful machine ; but a technical word not understood is mere idle breath. Let me take an instance from recent controversy.

The antithesis of *objective* and *subjective*, in the sense in which these words are used in German philosophy, has of late years been introduced into the Eucharistic controversy ; and to those who understand the terms, great definiteness has been thereby

rendered possible, and on this account controversialists value the terms; but I suspect that the number of persons who are capable of using them intelligently is extremely small, and I am quite sure that to the vast majority of Christians they convey no meaning whatever, except, perhaps, that *objective* is supposed to mean Popery, and *subjective* to mean Protestantism.

Hence I think that in considering whether a word should be permitted to do duty in a sermon, the primary question is whether, having reference to the character of the congregation to which the sermon is addressed, it is likely to convey to the hearers the meaning which is in the mind of the preacher. Of course, in doing this, the wants of the simplest members of the congregation should be most considered; but, in considering them, the wants of the most educated need not be neglected. This mixture of people, who are to be fed with the same food, does in reality constitute one great difficulty of sermons, whether in town or country, as regards, not words only, but other matters as well. It is a difficulty which cannot be altogether got over, but may be made less formidable than it seems, by careful consideration and honest efforts.

Let me illustrate a point to which I have already drawn attention—namely, the plainness of words as depending upon their Saxon origin—by reference to

the passage which I have just quoted from Professor Blunt. It is a portion of a paragraph in which he urges strongly that "the language of a sermon to a country congregation should be Saxon, not of Latin or French extraction." The passage is, I think, undoubtedly a good piece of racy English, such as Professor Blunt knew so well how to write; and yet, in the ten lines of which the passage consists, I find without difficulty as many as twenty-five Latin or French words. You may say he was writing for the readers of the *Quarterly Review*, and not for a village congregation: just so, but this shows that the rule of using Saxon to some congregations does not well apply, and even to a village congregation I do not know what Saxon substitutes you could easily give for such words as these: *congregation, educated, possible, edifying, squire, vulgarity, intended*, etc., etc.

Mr. Burgon has said, in his "Treatise on the Pastoral Office" (p. 176), "We have heard too much of the importance of using Anglo-Saxon words in addressing the uneducated. It seems that to acquire a great command of *idiomatic English* should rather be our aim. Words are not therefore easy because they are of Saxon derivation, or difficult because they proceed originally from a Latin source. The humblest auditors, again, are familiar with *Bible English*: so that a copious vocabulary is ever at hand, which there is only too much danger lest the

preacher should abuse by an over-liberal use of familiar Bible phrases. To suppose that monosyllables will of necessity conduce to plainness is a kindred mistake. An abstract thought will remain unintelligible, although expressed entirely in words of one syllable."

It would be a very good exercise for a young preacher to take a sermon, either his own or a printed one, and count in it the words which ought not to be there. And it would be a true kindness on the part of a friend to note words which appear to him not generally intelligible, and send them to the preacher, or rather give them to him privately for his consideration.

And more generally, I would express to young preachers or speakers my conviction that the *study of words* is not only infinitely entertaining under the guidance of such a man as Archbishop Trench, or Professor Max Müller, or M. Brachet, but may be made of infinite use in the practice of English composition. Take any word with which you meet, and whose structure and history you do not know, and follow it up until you have made yourself thoroughly acquainted with it in every way; this kind of exercise will lead to precision of expression and accuracy of diction, to say nothing of avoiding vulgarity.

## II. *Plain Construction.*

The next thing to the use of plain words is *plain*



*construction of sentences.* I have referred to *words* as the bricks or stones of the building ; but the bricks or stones must be put together, or *constructed*, in a skilful and workmanlike manner ; otherwise, although the material be good, the general result may be very disappointing. The differences of mode of expression in the styles of different men is very remarkable, as every one knows ; and a young preacher would do well to take some two or three writers, who appear to him to be particularly clear, and endeavour to imitate them, or at least examine them, and try to discover in what their clearness consists. French writers are generally good models ; there is a clearness in French expression which every one must have noted, and which it is difficult to transfer into English, though it is worth while sometimes to make the attempt. I need hardly say that the French pulpit has afforded an abundance of homiletical literature well worthy of any preacher's attention. But perhaps the model of clearness of construction is French mathematical writing ; here we have a subject capable of the most exact expression, and requiring it ; and in the French language and style we have perhaps the most perfect organ of expression. I think it would do any one good to take as an exercise the translation of a French mathematical or scientific work into English.

I do not know that obscurity of construction is



a very abundant fault in the English pulpit, but certainly there are men who contrive to put English words together so as to make them almost unintelligible ; I have been acquainted with men whose private letters have been so obscure as to require several perusals in order to make the reader at all sure as to their meaning. I have heard sermons which sinned much in the same manner, or rather worse, because in the case of a sermon several readings or hearings are impossible ; and I could mention writers whose meaning is wrapped up in obscurity because of the involved character of their style.

It should be remembered, as I have just now incidentally noticed, that a sermon cannot be heard more than once ; it is, as it were, a flying shot, and if you miss your aim, there is no second chance. Consequently a construction may be bad for a sermon, which is not bad in itself. Some of our great writers have shown their power over language by the skilful construction of long sentences, so cunningly and logically put together that the very reading of them is a delight. Jeremy Taylor may be taken as a conspicuous example. But this kind of construction, even if it be possible, is not suited to the pulpit : sentences should be short and pithy ; such as convey their meaning at once, so that a plain man may be able to take in the sense as he goes along.

Moreover, it should be remembered that to ordi-

nary persons simple enunciation of what we wish to say conveys a much clearer impression than a very elaborate statement. The more elaborate statement may be more fitting, if you wish to put your views in such a form that they may be published and be discussed by professional divines, and run the gauntlet of the reviews; but to simple folk who come to church to worship God, and learn the way to heaven, a simpler and less formal expression will convey your meaning much better. Let me illustrate what I mean by comparing the instructions which a man gives for his will with the will itself, when it has been manipulated by an expert into a document filling three or four skins of parchment. The man says, 'I have some land in the parish of *A*, and I have personal property of various kinds amounting to about £20,000: I wish my eldest son to have the land, and the personal property to be divided equally amongst my other children.' Who could doubt what the man's intentions were? But is it quite so certain that a plain man would arrive at the meaning, when it was put into that language in which experts deal, and which lawyers love so well?

It is probably on account of simplicity of construction that sermons preached *extempore*, if well preached, are more easily understood by poor folks than written sermons. I am not going now into the question of *extempore* versus *written* sermons; but

it certainly seems to me that whereas more material can be packed into the same time by writing, the spoken sermon, if well spoken, is more likely to be simple in the construction of its sentences, and so by simple folk more easily understood. The phrase *plain construction* may be taken in a wider sense, and may be regarded as applying to the lines upon which the sermon is built, as the skeleton to which the flesh of the sermon is attached. A sermon should have a skeleton, as the human body has one; but it should not wear it outside, like a crab or a lobster. The skeleton should be known to exist by the symmetrical form which it gives to the whole body. In other words, a sermon should have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and should be constructed upon a general plan well thought out before pen is put to paper. This will give unity to the whole composition. "Propose one point in one discourse," said Paley, in an ordination sermon, "and stick to it; a hearer never carries away more than one impression." Possibly the case may be overstated in this language, but anyhow it is most desirable that a person going away from church should be able to say, The subject of the sermon was this, or was that; and this result cannot possibly be secured without a plain construction of the whole discourse.

### III. *Plain Thoughts.*

But the two ingredients of plainness which I have

touched upon hitherto are of no use without a third—namely, *plain thoughts*. Plain words and plain construction will generally accompany plain thoughts; in other words, a man who thinks clearly will generally be able to express himself clearly; but clearness of expression is of no use, if the thing to be expressed is misty and unintelligible.

The primary requirement, therefore, for a plain sermon—which is not plain in the sense in which that adjective is applied to the human face, namely, in the sense of uninteresting and unattractive—is that the preacher should have thought out his subject clearly in the first instance. This is so obvious that perhaps it would be scarcely worth while to mention it, if it were not for the purpose of reminding young preachers of the clearness which may be introduced into many subjects by steady thinking. Thinking is a thing which cannot be done in a hurry; and if a sermon be put off till the day before it is preached, there is great danger of the subject not having been thought out; but if the text be chosen, and the subject taken in hand in the beginning of the week (supposing the sermon to be intended for the following Sunday), it is astonishing what an amount of light will break in upon it before the close of the week arrives.

There will be always a difference between one man and another with respect to clearness of thought, and



there are some minds which never under any circumstances emerge from a mist ; but I apprehend that the power of thinking continuously upon a subject, and gradually obtaining clear views of its several points, is just that which distinguishes the cultivated from the uncultivated mind ; and it is on this account, amongst others, that the education of the clerical mind is so important, and that every effort should be made to secure for the ministry of the Church men whose minds have been drilled by a regular course of liberal education, and have thus received something much deeper than a merely professional training.

But I may seem to be speaking on the supposition that the subjects with which Christian ministers have to deal are very abstruse, very hard, and requiring a great deal of vigorous thought. This supposition, no doubt, is not universally true : there are hard subjects to be dealt with, and from which sometimes the preacher must not shrink ; while it is also true that the large majority of subjects which can be usefully introduced into the pulpit are simple and admit of simple treatment. But in truth I have not had in mind difficult questions of theology in what I have been saying concerning plain thoughts, so much as the more simple and ordinary ; and I would urge, with regard to these simple and ordinary subjects, that it is possible to think clearly and to think obscurely, and



that a sermon on the simplest subject cannot be plain with regard to the thoughts which it contains, unless the preacher has thought the subject into clearness in his own mind. I regard the parish priest as thinking *for* his people during the week, quite as much as thinking *about* them : the greater number of them have no time to think, and not much ability ; but while they are working in their various weekly occupations, the parish priest is thinking out his subject for the next Sunday's teaching : it may be some point of doctrine which he considers it necessary to dwell upon, or it may be a parable supplied by the Gospel of the day, or it may be some subject suggested by the events of parish history ; but be it what it may, he studies it well, turns it over, and looks at it on this side and that, brings his daily reading and his daily visits to his parishioners to bear upon it and illustrate it, and when Sunday comes he will probably be surprised himself to find how clear his subject has become to his own mind, and he may have a good hope that by God's grace he will be able to make it clear to his people.

#### IV. *Plain Manner.*

The best of sermons may be spoiled by a bad delivery ; and therefore I will make my next head *plain manner*. This question of manner involves that of elocution—a subject with which I have neither the ability nor the time to deal completely ; but a

few remarks may be made with regard to that side of elocution which is concerned with the business of making quite plain to the understanding of others the sermon which I may suppose to be already written and ready to be delivered.

The first and simplest element of plainness of delivery is slowness, or, at all events, deliberateness of articulation. This is a truth which almost every preacher will soon find out for himself; but it is nevertheless worth mentioning. Using musical language, I should say that the proper *time* of a sermon should be *andante*, which means properly a moderate *walking pace*, neither running nor lagging; there may occasionally be an *adagio* or quicker passage, and sometimes even an *allegro* or rapid delivery; but the standard time should be a quiet, regular, steady *andante*.

This pace renders possible a clear and distinct enunciation. Clearness and distinctness are of more importance than loudness; in fact, in some churches loud utterance is fatal to hearing; the phenomena of acoustics in this matter are very strange and apparently capricious, and a preacher would do well to make inquiry as to what degree of loudness is found practically to make his voice most audible. But, as I have said, clearness and distinctness of enunciation are the points of greatest moment; and one great condition of clearness is to be found in what I may

call the perfect finish of each word ; each word should be thoroughly and carefully pronounced, and, above all things, the voice should not be dropped at the close of a sentence, but sustained in its fulness to the very end.

Young clergymen who are defective in matters of this kind, should not be ashamed to take lessons in elocution, or at least to make careful reading aloud a regular practice ; it would not be amiss to make an oration occasionally, like Demosthenes, upon the seashore, or, at all events, in the open air, with no audience but the birds. For the human voice is an instrument, the powers of which may be expanded and improved ; and as public singers attain their marvellous power by laborious and constant practice, so the preacher, who has to use his voice for a much more glorious purpose, should think no labour lost which enables him to use his voice as an efficient instrument for conveying his message in the plainest manner to his people.

A quiet, unimpassioned delivery is, I think, on the whole, the best ; at all events, it best suits the taste of sober English people. According to our parochial system, parishioners generally have to listen to the same teacher for years together ; and certainly, when this is the case, a quiet manner is the best,—it wears the longest ; an impassioned style may do as an occasional excitement, but a solemn and sober

delivery is that which every wise person will prefer who has to listen to the same preacher week by week.

And there is another point which is quite as essential as anything I have yet mentioned for plain delivery, and that is the possession by the preacher of his sermon in such a manner that he can deliver it as if without a book. If a sermon be properly delivered, it ought to be very difficult for any one in the congregation to say whether the preacher has a book before him or not: a preacher ought never, in the ordinary sense of the word, to *read* his sermon; he may have, if necessary, a manuscript before him, but he ought to have so far mastered his own composition, so far *mandated* it, according to the Scottish phrase, that his manuscript is rather an aid to memory than a book out of which he is to read his sermon. This kind of knowledge of what he is saying, or going to say, will ensure proper emphasis, and (which is much the same thing) that naturalness of enunciation which belongs to ordinary speech, and which some people lose the moment they begin to read. It is not unusual to find a clergyman whose ordinary mode of address in his own house, or in yours, is easy, graceful, agreeable, and who, nevertheless, in preaching, appears to acquire the wooden qualities of the pulpit in which he stands. This ought not to be, and it is difficult to understand why it need be.



Of course I am not supposing the case of affectation—that is too horrible a thing to be thought of. I doubt not that vanity and folly can find their way sometimes even into the pulpit ; but these are faults to be dealt with, not by a lecture such as this, but by penitence and a sense of shame.

One other element of plainness of manner may be mentioned, and it is that which will arise from a sense of speaking with authority ; it is difficult to define this manner, but it will form itself in the practice of a man who endeavours to realize his high vocation, and the magnitude of the message which he has to deliver. Every one knows how much influence depends in common affairs upon the manner and bearing of a man : it is not a fussy assumption of importance that is needed,—this makes a man ridiculous ; neither is it a magnification of self, or anything of this kind ; but there is a certain quiet, solemn, commanding manner, which belongs to a man who is evidently speaking under a sense of responsibility and a determination to make his message known. This will rarely fail to produce its effect ; and, at all events, it is the most suitable manner for the delivery of a plain sermon.

#### V. *Plain Doctrine.*

Another necessary element of a plain sermon is *plain doctrine* ; so necessary, that it might perhaps have been expected that I should have given it a



higher or earlier position in this lecture. But, in truth, the doctrinal side of the question was not that which chiefly presented itself to my mind in preparing this lecture; doctrine seems almost to demand an entire discussion for itself, and I merely introduce it here for the purpose of making two or three remarks, which the consideration of the elements of a plain sermon seems imperatively to require.

Certainly our Lord's own sermons were very plain, so far as doctrine was concerned; the Sermon on the Mount is a very model of plainness—there is nothing in it from beginning to end that can puzzle the simplest mind; and it was probably in part this feature of the sermon which led to the criticism passed upon it by the people, who compared it with the teaching of the scribes. They said that He “spake with authority”; but they must have also felt that He spake in such a way that they knew what He meant; there were no puzzling questions concerning knotty points of the Law, which had been discussed and controverted over and over again by opposing schools, but principles laid down, and precepts founded upon them, in a way which could not but commend itself to every honest heart.

Following our Lord's example, I think a plain sermon should avoid as much as possible discussions of hard speculative points, such as the nature of God's predestinating decrees, and in fact the whole

Calvinistic controversy, as it is called ; or the manner of our Lord's presence in the Holy Eucharist ; or curious questions connected with the world unseen ; and, in general, questions arising out of scientific controversies and theological difficulties connected with them. There is not one clergyman in a hundred who has the qualifications necessary for dealing with such questions properly ; and even if he had, there is not one hearer in a thousand who would be any the better for hearing the questions dealt with ; the discussion of such questions belongs to books rather than to sermons ; and if they are difficult to understand when contained in books, which can be read and studied, they are hopelessly unmanageable in a sermon addressed to an ordinary congregation ; and to such a congregation they are especially unprofitable.

It must not be supposed, however, from what has just been said, that the plain doctrine of the pulpit is to be such as to banish mystery. I need scarcely say, that the doctrine which is essentially Christian begins with mystery and ends with mystery ; it begins with the Incarnation of the eternal Son of God, and it ends with His ascension into heaven and the coming of the Holy Ghost. A supernatural religion (and I do not know how a religion can deserve the name which is *not* supernatural) is essentially mysterious. But the enunciation of a mystery

may nevertheless be such as to be truly described as plain. Nothing can be more plain than the Apostles' Creed: all the facts of the earthly life of the Son of God enumerated in the most majestic simplicity; and yet each fact a mystery, almost each fact a miracle. The doctrine may be plain, and yet it may rest upon mystery too deep for human thought to fathom.

The discussion of the sacraments in the Church Catechism may perhaps be taken as a good and familiar specimen of plain doctrine in a very difficult region. It would not be easy to propose a harder problem than that of writing a plain essay on the sacraments upon a single page; and yet this is really what has been done, and done with remarkable success, in the case of the Church Catechism.

In truth, the extent of doctrine which can be advantageously introduced into ordinary parish sermons is not great. The chief points to be looked to are that the doctrine shall be stated correctly, and that it shall be enunciated clearly. For the better attaining of this latter point, I would suggest that for simple folks illustration is perhaps better than the most logical and precise enunciation; an illustration, a parable, a comparison, will rarely carry the whole of the truth, but the part which it does carry it will probably carry home. And really to be content with carrying home only part of the truth, one chapter of

it, or one verse of it, is the true wisdom of a preacher. When a clergyman attempts a pulpit exposition of doctrine on a very complete scale, the probability is that his congregation will be weary before he begins, the almost certainty is that they will be weary before he has reached the end. Be content with hammering in one nail at a time; and remember that one nail clinched will hold longer, and do more work, than twenty which are not driven home.

#### VI. *Plain Purpose.*

I now come to my last head of plainness; and I reserve this last place for *plain purpose*.

I use the phrase *plain purpose* to express that manner of preaching which impresses a hearer with a strong belief that the preacher feels that he has something to say which is worth saying, and which ought to be said. This impression carries the mind away from the speaker to the thing spoken. It is obvious that the effect of a sermon ought to be, not an admiration of the preacher, but a sense of having heard something which one will never forget, or of having formed a good resolution for the future, or of having had light thrown upon some point previously obscure, or of having in some way or another received a benefit to the soul.

All this is, I think, obvious enough; but the difficulty in giving any precept or advice upon the subject consists in this—that any attempt to appear earnest,



or impressive, or authoritative, is likely, or even sure, to issue in failure. "Be not as the hypocrites," or be not as those who act a part upon the stage, is good advice for all preachers. The plainness of a preacher's purpose must be the result of the inward persuasion that he has a great message to deliver, and that the time is short. And therefore the power of impressing people with the belief that a preacher has a purpose, and of making them understand what that purpose is, must be sought rather in private devotional preparation for the pulpit, than in any other way. If a man believes that he has a Gospel to declare which will do good to his brethren's souls; and if in preparation for each sermon in which that Gospel is declared he humbles himself before God, and asks the aid of the Holy Spirit; and if he verily believes himself to be a chosen vessel of God appointed to do this work,—surely it must be manifest from his mode of speech what his purpose is in speaking to the people; and it seems to be well nigh impossible that they can fail to understand it. It cannot be denied that many clergymen have much to learn in this matter; and that not a few sermons, sufficiently good and profitable in themselves, are ruined by the mode of delivery; and that almost every other defect can be easily pardoned, provided that the sermon is so delivered as to leave the impression upon the hearer's mind, "That man says what he means, and means what he says."



But I must bring my paper to a close. Let me do so by recapitulating the heads of plainness which I have represented as necessary to constitute a plain sermon.

They are :—1. Plain words. 2. Plain construction. 3. Plain thoughts. 4. Plain manner. 5. Plain doctrine. 6. Plain purpose.

Possibly a more elaborate analysis might suggest other heads ; but I am quite sure that if a sermon is characterized only by these features of plainness, it will be in a very true sense a plain sermon ; and it will be one which the preacher may thank God that he has been able to preach, and the people may be thankful that they have been permitted to hear.



**The Preparation of Sermons for Village  
Congregations.**

BY THE REVEREND CHARLES ABEL HEURTLEY, D.D., CANON  
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## VI.

### *THE PREPARATION OF SERMONS FOR VILLAGE CONGREGATIONS.*

IT is obvious that much of what is to be said on "The Preparation of Sermons for Village Congregations" must be applicable to sermons in general, whatever the character of the audience for which they are intended. And under this aspect I propose to deal with my subject, only having an eye throughout to the particular case of sermons of the kind specified.

My remarks will have reference to written sermons, though, of course, here also much that must be said will apply equally to unwritten. I do not enter into the question, which of the two is to be preferred. But I venture to press upon young men who are just entering upon the work of the ministry the importance of beginning, at all events, with written sermons, whatever they may think right to do after two or three years' experience. Cottage lectures will probably supply sufficient opportunity for the practice of speaking without book.



*I. Special Prayer.*

Let us suppose, then, that we are about to prepare a sermon, a sermon to be preached before a village audience.

What is the first thing to be done? We must begin with prayer. The employment we are taking in hand is one of the most important in our ministry. We have to deliver a message from God, to speak in God's name to the people whom He has committed to our charge, and that on the gravest of all subjects. Let us realize this, and together with it our own insufficiency, our liability to err, our need of the Holy Spirit's aid to suggest materials, to enable us to express ourselves, and, when we preach, to touch the hearts of our hearers. Who has not felt himself at times like a ship becalmed in mid-ocean, unable to make progress, till, having been brought to his knees, God has heard his prayer and has sent forth His Spirit? Then, like the same ship when a favouring breeze has sprung up and filled its sails, he speeds prosperously on his way.

This, then, is the first point: We must begin with prayer—with prayer directed specially to the matter in hand, prayer that God will guide us in the choice of our subject, that He will suggest the proper handling of it, and the matter suitable to it. And as we begin, so we must continue, almost every fresh paragraph being made the subject of a special

supplication : "Teach me, Lord, what it behoves me to say here ;" "Enable me to press home these considerations effectually to the consciences of my hearers." Need I say how profitable an exercise the preparation of a sermon thus prepared must be to the writer, while preparing it ; how sure a presage of its efficacy and fruitfulness to the hearers, when preached ?

What has been said has referred to prayer specially directed to the sermon in hand ; but let us not forget the importance of a habit of prayer and recollectedness, as affecting the tone of our sermons generally. He who most converses with God will best speak for God, and as God would have him speak.

And let us not think that because a sermon is intended for a simple and unlearned congregation, there is no so great occasion to seek that special aid, of our need of which, in the case of a sermon to be preached before an educated audience, we might be painfully sensible. The Holy Spirit's influence is equally needed to teach us what to say and how to say it, that it may prove effectual, whoever the hearers may be.

## II. *Subjects.*

What is to be the subject of our sermon ? Shall we take a single text, and illustrate it, and enlarge upon it, and draw from it its lessons of instruction, whether doctrinal or practical ? Or shall we take a

larger portion of Scripture, a narrative or a parable—the Gospel for the day, for instance—and explain and apply it? Or shall our sermon be one of a series of lectures on some book of Holy Scripture, or on the Creed, or the Lord's Prayer, or the Ten Commandments, or the Sacraments, or the Prayer Book?

The advantage of narrative subjects is, that they more easily secure the interest of the hearers, and are more readily remembered, not only in the general, but also as to the points specially selected for application. Thus, *e.g.*, if we wished to impress upon our audience the danger of presumptuous self-confidence in the prospect of temptation, we could not do so more effectually than by starting from the history of Peter's fall; if the evil of faint-heartedness and distrust of God's aid and protection when in the way of duty, the conduct of the Israelites, in refusing to go up and take possession of the land of Canaan, would afford a useful opening. If we wished to point out the sinfulness of shutting our eyes to the claims which others, whether near or remote, have upon us for succour or courtesy, or our liability to deceive ourselves in such matters by specious pretexts, no portion of Scripture could better serve our purpose than the parable of the Good Samaritan.

One advantage of courses of sermons is, that they furnish a subject ready at hand, when other-

wise we might be at a loss, and might waste our time in balancing between one text and another. They also prevent that sameness and self-repetition, which are almost unavoidable where a preacher who, week after week, has to address the same congregation, falls back upon his ordinary resources. Above all, they suggest topics often very seasonable, and much needing to be brought forward, whether in the way of doctrine or practice, which either might not have occurred to the preacher, or which he might have felt some difficulty in introducing abruptly or as of set purpose, but which, coming in the regular course of his teaching, fall naturally into their place, and have less the appearance of being personal.

Yet a long course, without interruption or variation, is not desirable. People become tired of the sameness of the general plan, notwithstanding the variety of detail to which it ministers. It is well to intermingle every now and then, as occasion may require or suggest, sermons on single texts, or on other passages of Scripture—those especially which occur in the services of the day—or on special subjects.

Courses of sermons on the Creed afford an opportunity for systematic doctrinal teaching on the great fundamental articles of our faith, one or another of which might possibly be neglected or overlooked, unless its treatment were in some such

way suggested from without. The advantage of a course on portions of the Prayer Book, as instructing the people how to pray with the understanding, while they follow the minister with the eye or the voice, is obvious. It may require special tact to interest a village congregation in sermons of either description. Neither course should be of great length. There are some excellent specimens of the latter kind in the second volume of the late Augustus Hare's "*Sermons to a Country Congregation*"—excellent, not only for the simplicity of the thought and style, but also for the interest with which the subject is invested—as there are also in Mr. Keble's "*Sermons for the Christian Year*."

In the case of occasional sermons, where a text has once been chosen, it is better, as a rule, to go forward with it, than to waste time and energy by laying it down, only to take another, which may prove equally untractable. I do not forget the advice contained in Horace's words—

"Quæ

Desperat tractata nitescere posse relinquit ;"

but study, aided by prayer, will often unlock a door which at first seemed hopelessly closed ; or, to change the metaphor, will open out a fountain of abundant waters where at first nothing was to be seen but an arid desert.



Whatever the subject, however, we must remember that one object to be constantly kept in view is to set forth Christ as the alone Saviour, both from the guilt of sin by His atonement, and from the dominion of sin by His Spirit; to set Him forth, too, not merely as an historical person who has long since disappeared from the scene, but whose memory we are to cherish and whose example we are to imitate, but as One who even now lives, the selfsame that He was in the days of His flesh—as sympathizing, as loving, as ready to succour, yet as holy, as severe in His reprobation of hypocrisy and pretentiousness, as when He was conversant among men.

We must take heed, too, of addressing a Christian congregation as though it consisted wholly or principally of heathens. All have in baptism been dedicated to Christ, have been admitted into the Christian covenant, have been invested with its privileges, have been brought under its responsibilities. If any are living in the neglect of God and His service, they are to be warned that they are doing so in spite of the most solemn obligations; if any are in good earnest seeking to live as Christians, they are to be bidden to remember Whose children they are, Whose Spirit dwells within them, and exhorted to “stir up” the grace which has been given them, and to be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” In nothing is there a greater contrast between the

tone of St. Paul's epistles and that of many modern sermons than in the light in which the persons addressed are regarded. And it would be no unprofitable exercise to read through one or two of those epistles—those to the Corinthians or the Galatians, for instance—keeping this one object in view, to mark the footing on which the Apostle conceives those to whom he is writing to stand, and the manner in which he deals with them, whether he has to praise or to blame, to warn, or to exhort, or to encourage. Let me refer to such passages as 1 Cor. i., vi., x.; 2 Cor. vi. 14—vii. 1; Gal. iii., iv.; Rom. vi.

### III. *Materials.*

We have now sought God's blessing by special prayer, and we have chosen our subject. Whence shall we obtain the materials for our sermon?

These, like the materials of Solomon's Temple, should be got ready before we proceed to write. A man may indeed sit down with commentaries and other works, from which he hopes to gain assistance, spread out before him, and, as he proceeds, avail himself of them, as he finds them suitable to his purpose. But this is to use these appliances at the wrong time. They will only clog his freedom of thought, and prove hindrances rather than the helps which they would be if used at the right time. His sermon will be crude and ill-digested, or a mere patchwork. All that we want when we begin to

write is pen, ink, and paper, a Bible within reach, and a mind well furnished.

Our materials are of two sorts—those prepared specially for the occasion, and those which are being accumulated from time to time for general use.

1. As to those prepared specially for the occasion. The text, with its context, should be studied in the original Greek, or, if it is from the Old Testament, and if we are Hebrew scholars, as we ought to be, in the original Hebrew. And this should be followed up—not preceded, observe—by reference to one or another judicious commentary, or to any other work likely to throw light upon it,—a sermon on the same text, if you will. The suggestions thus obtained may be put down roughly on a loose sheet, as they occur, to be worked in as opportunity serves.

I do not forget, while recommending this study of the text—this learned study, it may be—that it is a sermon for a rustic audience which we have in view. No doubt nothing could well be more out of place than a *show* of learning in such a discourse. But whatever the character of the audience, it is due to them, it is due to God's Word, that we should spare no pains in endeavouring to ascertain the true meaning of the passage which we are taking upon us to deal with.

2. Then as to a stock of materials for general use.

First and foremost is the diligent and devout study

of the Bible—some portion daily—in its whole compass. This will furnish an unfailing store on which to draw. I do not mean in the shape of quotations scattered here and there with more or less appropriateness, but the spontaneous outflow of a mind thoroughly penetrated with the Word of God, which has read, and fed upon, and digested, and assimilated the Word of God—a mind which has become habituated to judge of persons and conduct by the standard of Scripture—a mind which, by being continually conversant with the mind of God, has, in its measure, grown into conformity with it.

Further, we should be on the alert to add to our store materials gathered from whatsoever other writings duty, or taste, or inclination, or it may be accident, may bring in our way. St. Paul, Jew though he was, had made acquaintance with Greek authors, and he turned it to account. There is, indeed, hardly any description of literature, from which a mind in a healthy state may not derive materials available for use on some occasion or other. What lessons of human nature—often, alas! the saddest side of it, but one with which we have too good need to be acquainted—are to be learnt from a newspaper!

But we need not travel so far from home as even to a newspaper to gain a knowledge of human nature. Our own hearts will afford us ample scope for study,



and if studied, will afford us a never-failing supply of materials for our sermons. When we are describing our own case (though we need not, and ordinarily ought not, to speak of it as our own), our own temptations, our own miscarriages, our own successes (if God of His grace has, in any instance, vouchsafed us success), we may be certain that we are touching chords which will vibrate through many a heart in our congregation, and our hearers will marvel, perhaps, at our acquaintance with their circumstances, or in some instances may suspect us, as they would word it, of "preaching at them," when it has been our own likeness which we have been portraying.

After all, however, there is no more fruitful or more important source from which to derive matter for our sermons, than that which is supplied by intercourse with our people. This will furnish us with a knowledge of particulars most necessary for our guidance, and scarcely less so for enabling us to secure the attention and engage the interest of our hearers. It is the dealing with general statements, general exhortations, instead of descending to particulars, that makes many sermons, otherwise excellent, miss their mark. From intercourse with our people we shall learn the special trials and temptations which we are to keep in view, the particular sins which prevail, the particular prejudices, misapprehensions, errors, forms of self-deceit, which need to



be exposed. We shall become accustomed to their way of viewing things, to their modes of thought, to their proverbial sayings, their similes, their metaphors, their illustrations, in all of which the poor abound. In a word, we shall become used to their language, and they to ours; and when we come to write, we shall naturally and unstudiedly express ourselves so as to be understood by them—not only, I mean, as to the words we use, but, what is of at least as much importance, as to the sentiments and modes of thought which those words express.

#### IV. *The Handling of the Subject.*

We have now got our materials in readiness. It remains to shape them and turn them to account.

The first thing is to have clearly before us what it is that we are going to write about—a suggestion not so needless as might be thought, especially considering that we have already decided upon our text, and have studied it. There are cases, not, I suspect, unusual, where people set out without any distinct idea of any definite subject, and go on, adding sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph, till they have filled the requisite number of pages, so bringing the matter at last to a decorous close. And when this is reached, beyond the text, it would be a hard matter either for the preacher or his hearers to say precisely what the sermon has been about. It is well to ask ourselves, then, “What is our subject?”

and then to set the answer down categorically on paper, and let it lie conspicuously before us while we are writing, as his compass does before the helmsman, that it may keep us to our point, and preserve us from that vague, rambling way of proceeding of which I spoke. The same rule may usefully be applied to the several divisions and subdivisions of the sermon. "What is the point before me now?" "What is the lesson I am proposing to teach?" "What class of persons am I to keep in view here?" etc., etc. The answer in each case to be written down as before, and placed in front of us.

Such questions are useful also for opening out a subject, and suggesting modes of handling it. For instance :—

1. What relation does the text bear to the context—both that which precedes and that which follows?

2. Does it require explanation? Has it any special difficulty? Is it liable to be misunderstood or abused?

3. What is the subject of it? What its subordinate parts?

4. What is its practical bearing, or that of its subordinate parts, upon various classes of persons—for instance, upon rich, poor, the young, the old, ungodly persons, careless persons, persons in affliction, sincere and earnest persons, and such as are advancing in the Christian life? etc., etc.

5. What arguments are proper to prove this point ? what considerations to persuade this course ?

These may serve as specimens, and the mention of them will suggest others.

It is not well to have many heads or divisions in a sermon. Two or three, however, are desirable. They serve as rests, and enable the hearer to brace himself up afresh for renewed attention, if he has begun to flag. If the sermon were for an educated audience, it would not, as a rule, be desirable to state these divisions formally at the outset. They ought to indicate themselves sufficiently of their own accord, as they occur. Where the congregation is uneducated, it is a help to them to know beforehand what they are to look for.

If the text be a narrative or a parable, and consequently may have two or three or more points to which attention is to be directed, it is still important to seize the central point—in a parable, for instance, the one scope towards which the parable is directed—and treat the others as subordinate to it, making each the head of a separate division. Thus, in the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, the scope of the parable, as indicated by Peter's question which suggested it, "What shall we have therefore?" is to exclude a self-sufficient spirit, which makes much of its own merits, and is indignant that others should be put on a level with it—such as was manifested

by the Pharisees in reference to the publicans and sinners, and often by the Jewish converts in reference to their Gentile brethren. But any one of the subordinate parts of the narrative or parable might itself be made the central subject of a sermon, and then the narrative or parable would serve to introduce it. Thus, in the parable referred to, the reply of the labourers to the question, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" "Because no man hath hired us," might serve as a suitable and pregnant text for a missionary sermon; or the circumstance that some of the labourers were hired at the eleventh hour might be made available for pointing out the danger of trusting to a death-bed repentance, which is very commonly encouraged by an ignorant misapplication of it.

If the sermon be simply expository, it is still well, if possible, to concentrate the several subjects which come before us around one principal subject. But if this cannot be done—and we must not fetter ourselves by too strict a rule—then we must contrive to have two or three points standing out with distinct prominence, each of them, the last especially, being made the occasion of some practical lesson.

My object in laying so much stress on unity of treatment is to make sure that our hearers shall have something which they can grasp and carry away with them, which is more than can always be said. It will



often contribute to this to state at the outset what the sermon is to be about, though not necessarily in a formal way—in fact, to let the first paragraph be an epitome of the whole. This will naturally be followed by explanation and unfolding of the text, or, if a narrative or a parable, by a recapitulation of the details, pointing out their connection with and subordination to the principal subject.

While speaking of the introduction of the sermon, let me mention the importance of throwing as much interest into it as possible. It is of great consequence to secure the attention of the hearers at the outset. But we must not only secure their attention at the outset, we must sustain it to the end. We *must* have attention; we *must* be listened to with interest. Otherwise, however plain and intelligible our sermon, however full of valuable matter, and however useful its lessons, our labour will be lost.

The following hints may be of service : Do not let us rest satisfied with general statements, general directions, general cautions, etc. These must be followed out into particulars. We must give instances of what we mean—instances drawn from Scripture, or furnished by other books, or suggested by our own experience, especially by intercourse with our parishioners—only taking care to avoid every approach to personality. We must ask questions—sometimes supplying the answers, at other times



leaving it to our hearers to give them. We may refer, where occasion serves, to local history of ancient date connected with the church, or parish, or neighbourhood—for instance, the figure of a knight in armour on an ancient monument might serve to illustrate a sermon on the Christian armour (Eph. vi.), or we may avail ourselves of matters of recent occurrence or of public notoriety. We may lay hold of proverbs in frequent use, and point out how, as is often the case, they are misapplied ; or of common phrases, which are made to serve the purpose of excusing what is evil or stigmatizing what is good—as, for example, when sins, which it ought to be a shame even to speak of, are called “misfortunes,” or when religious earnestness is sneered at as “Methodism.”

Much, too, may be done by the style, both of the composition and of the delivery. Of these I shall speak of set purpose directly. All I would say meanwhile is, that they should be suited to the subject-matter presently in hand—lively, or earnest, or deeply serious, as the case may be. Occasionally attention may be roused or kept awake by the employment of paradox, followed by explanation of the meaning intended : as for instance, “It may seem a strange thing to say, but the Bible says it, ‘Be not righteous over-much.’ What can this mean? Can we be too righteous?” There are occasions, too

when in the more earnest and fervent parts it may not be improper to make momentary appeals to God, in the shape of ejaculatory prayers, instances of which we find in St. Paul's epistles. But such appeals should be the genuine outpouring of our hearts. What would be genuine in one man would be unnatural and out of character in another. Anything like an affectation of fervency—indeed, affectation of any kind—is intolerable. The pulpit is not a stage, nor the preacher an actor.

The same holds of that quality of style which is called “unction,” which is most effective both in securing and riveting the attention, and, under God, in laying hold of the affections, and reaching the hearts and consciences of the hearers. One rule, and but one, can be prescribed for the attainment of it. It must be the genuine expression of a heart penetrated with a lively sense of the Divine majesty, constrained by the love of Christ, animated by the love of souls, the fruit of habitual communion with God in secret, and of prayer and self-application accompanying the sermon while it is being both prepared and preached.

#### V. *Language and Style.*

As to language, here also the first rule is to be natural, to endeavour to speak as we should express ourselves if we were speaking to one or another of those who compose our audience on the same subjects

in private—or rather, were preaching to the same audience without book. This is not always an easy matter. The moment we take pen in hand, we are apt to fall into an artificial style, with measured cadences, and sentences framed less simply than when we speak—a style proper for an essay or a dissertation, but too stiff and elaborate for a sermon. I am not recommending negligence or slovenliness (God forbid !), nor again familiarity, which would be unsuitable to our subject, as well as to the place, the occasion, and our own character and office. What is wanted is, as I have said, a style as nearly as possible approaching to that which we should use, both as to our words and as to the structure of our sentences, if our sermon were unwritten, and we were preaching without book. I know of no better way of attaining it than by endeavouring, while we write, to place our congregation before us, in imagination, and to test what we have written, from time to time, by what we have reason to believe the calibre of their understandings. I am not sure that the placing of the photographs of two or three representative persons among them before us might not be of service to keep us from overshooting our mark, whether in language or in thought.

I believe the direction above given carries with it in principle all that is necessary on the subject of language. This will guide us as to the kind of words

to be employed. These should, of course, be such as are in common use among our people. Yet we are not bound to restrict ourselves over-anxiously to these. We do not do so in conversing with them, and yet are understood. A manifestly condescending adoption of their speech is to be avoided. More stress than is necessary is often laid on the use of words of Anglo-Saxon origin. The vocabulary of the poor is by no means restricted to these. In some instances, curiously enough, of two synonyms, they choose the one of Norman or Latin origin. What is of more consequence is to avoid long and involved sentences. These may be proper enough in what is intended for the eye—where, if the meaning be not taken in at once, the sentence may be read again—but are out of place in what is intended for the ear, especially the uneducated ear.

Let me say what remains to be said on this head as briefly as possible.

I have already spoken of the importance of being natural. It is only putting the same direction into the form of a caution to say, Avoid affectation. Let me add, Avoid egotism. That little pronoun of one letter, of the first person singular, ought to be used sparingly and with judgment. The corresponding plurals, “we” and “us,” are generally, though not invariably, to be chosen in preference to the plural of the second person, at least where the preacher has



not the authority of years superadded to that of office. It is more in keeping, most of us must feel, with the consciousness we have of our own infirmity, to associate ourselves with our hearers, as sympathizing with them in their trials and temptations; and yet we must speak with authority also, as remembering in Whose Name we speak. But authority is not weakened, but strengthened rather, when it is tempered with sympathy.

Another caution closely allied to the preceding is to avoid a harsh, scolding style. Men are more easily led than driven. There are cases, indeed, and those unhappily not of unfrequent occurrence, where we have to speak of conduct which must be denounced with unsparing severity. But severity should not be the general tone of our sermons, and the circumstance of its not being the general tone will give it the more weight, and make it the more effectual, when, on a just occasion, it does occur.

Let me sum up all in three or four sentences.

Let us write in the spirit of prayer. Let our sermon be real; let it be full of charity; let it be serious, grave, earnest, confident of attention, authoritative, and yet tender and sympathising, and respectful—for respect is due to the humblest audience. Above all, let Christ be the sun and centre of it, attracting all men's eyes and hearts, and shedding His blessed light throughout. "We preach Christ



crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

#### VI. *Delivery.*

My subject is the preparation of a sermon, and my work in strictness is completed, when what I have to say of the preparation has been said. But I must add one word on the delivery.

We are not to read a sermon as if we were reading an essay or a dissertation. We have a number of persons before us, and we are addressing ourselves to them. We must speak to them as we should do if our sermon were merely spoken, and not written, varying our tone and manner, of course, according to our matter, whether as stating certain truths, or reasoning and conducting an argument, or pressing home some weighty duty, or remonstrating or pleading with sinners. In one word, here also we must be real, natural, unaffected. This simple principle, as in the case of style, comprises everything of importance. We must avoid imitating the manner of any preacher of whom we may happen to have, and possibly justly, a high opinion, but whose manner, though natural and graceful in him, might be the reverse in us. Our own delivery will best suit our own sentences. Probably enough, our natural manner admits of improvement. It may have grave

defects. Let us by all means do all we can to discover the defects, and use all the helps we can to correct and amend them. But withal, I say once more, Let us be real, let us be natural, let us be consistent and of a piece. Let us forget ourselves, let us enter heartily into our work, let us remember Whose work it is, in Whose Name, and in Whose hearing we speak; Whose message we have to deliver, what issues depend upon it, to Whom we must give account,—and speak as realizing these.



## *The Preacher's Gifts.*

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## VII.

### *THE PREACHER'S GIFTS.*

IT pleases God, not less by the variety of gifts bestowed upon His people, than by the diversity of office, to complete the unity of His Church. The two things are not identical. It is not only that various kinds of gifts are needed for the diverse offices through which Christ accomplishes the work of the Church; but it is that there is an infinite variety of gifts which men bring to one and the same office. Of the gifts of the preacher this is peculiarly true. The differences which distinguish the discharge of this great function of the Christian ministry are matters of common observation and experience; the familiar recognition of certain men as the great preachers of their time bears witness to it. Nor is the difference which distinguishes one preacher from another, as it appears to me, only a difference of degree, but it is a difference of kind. It is true that there may be a difference of degree. A higher tension of faculty, a more perfect cultivation, a richer wealth of imagination, an ampler store of learning,

and a more exquisite sympathy, may produce a pre-eminent exercise in one man of the selfsame gifts, as are possessed by other men in a lower degree and with a diminished force. If this were all, the weakest passages of one man's eloquence would be indistinguishable from the higher flights of another. But there is likewise a difference of kind. Certain characteristic qualities give a speciality both of matter and of language so precise and specific as to enable a critical mind to recognise, without much difficulty, the preacher from whom they have proceeded. He will identify a great preacher, as readily as an artist recognises the hand of a great painter.

The fact may be recognised in the great preachers of all ages. It may be seen in inspired Apostles, so far as their writings enable us to judge of their spoken words. The vigorous argumentation of St. Paul, sometimes abrupt and unconnected, from the very rapidity and vehemence with which he thought, is characteristically different from the fervid earnestness of St. Peter, or from that mixture of practical wisdom with a highly imaginative style, actually crowded with figures, which we find in St. James, or from the loving tenderness and deep spiritual insight of St. John. In the great preachers of antiquity the same difference is perceptible. The manly vigour of Tertullian, replete with feeling and imagination, is distinct from the fluent clearness of Cyprian, from

the Ciceronian periods of Lactantius, from the acute subtilty and imperious logic of Athanasius, from the hard forensic oratory of Ambrose, from the elaborate and florid eloquence of Basil and the Gregories, from the nervousness of Hilary, from the ardour and wit of Jerome, from the luxuriant splendour of Chrysostom, and from the passion, energy, and dialectical subtilty of Augustine. The same characteristic differences have reappeared in the preachers of later times. The intense energy of Luther stands in sharp contrast with the grace and elegance of Melancthon, and with the trenchant vivacity of Calvin. The characteristics of Basil have been recognised in Bossuet, and the golden utterances of Chrysostom in Massillon. To come to our own divines, the majestic eloquence of Hooker is quite distinct from the intricate style, yet dignity and pathos, of Donne, the spirit and striking imagery of Reynolds, the amplitude and method of Barrow, the nervousness and wit of South, and the mingled humour, fancy, argumentative force and versatile eloquence of Jeremy Taylor. For evident reasons I forbear to extend these brief criticisms into our own times; but the remembrance of some of the addresses delivered in connection with the Church Homiletical Society may remind us that rhetorical powers second to none in other times are yet to be found among the highest dignitaries of our own Church.

Now, this difference alike in the matter and the manner of the preacher depends on a corresponding difference in his mental habitude, again not a difference of degree only, but a difference of kind. This variety of mental habitude in its turn arises from a variety of gifts—I mean powers which are part of our mental and moral constitution. We can give no further account of them than that they are endowments bestowed by God. How far they may be due in any degree to the associations of infancy and the unconscious influences which begin to act, even from the cradle, is a nice question which I must not stop to discuss. It is certain that the variety may be traced back to actual childhood. Let a group of children be reared in the same nursery, and brought up under the same nurse; let them be submitted to the same discipline, and trained to the same studies, under the same teachers, yet they will be found to differ as they grow up. These differences will gradually develop themselves in their various directions, and will so harden into habits as to be, so far as we see, an inseparable part of a man's individuality.

This belief in the constitutional differences of man from man is not affected by the fact that, up to a certain point, gifts not naturally possessed may yet be attained by practice. For instance, the power of extempore speech may be acquired. A man's nervous constitution may render him unable to think



with the necessary rapidity and accuracy in the presence of others, and he may be devoid of that fluent command of words which makes speaking either easy to himself or pleasant to his hearers. Yet, by persevering effort and careful cultivation, he may acquire both these powers, not only adequately for all practical purposes, but even to very considerable perfection. The same thing is true of other gifts of the preacher. But yet the acquired power will always differ widely from the natural gift. The process of acquisition will be exceedingly laborious, and the power, when attained, will never pass beyond a certain limit, or reach the perfection in which it is exercised, without an effort, by other men. In the case just specified, for instance, the exercise of a vigorous common sense may make a man a fair, or even a successful, extempore preacher, and yet there is a certain point and pith, a completeness in the structure of sentences, and a fluent propriety and piquancy in the choice of words, which no cultivation will enable a man to attain when the natural gift has been withheld.

Nor is the belief in these constitutional differences affected by the fact that all gifts, however constitutional, admit of cultivation—nay, even require it. There are many familiar cases, where latent powers may be possessed unconsciously, till some strong occasion calls them into exercise. But cultivation,



though it will improve the natural gift in all men, will not equalize it in any men. Look at a group of boys, and observe how they differ in stature and in strength. The same process of growth takes place in them all, and they develop into men. But that growth has not equalized their bodily conditions: they differ from each other as men as widely as they differed from each other as boys. So it is with mental faculties. They grow with exercise; but when they have reached the highest perfection to which cultivation can bring them, they will still differ in degree in different men, as much as the body differs in features, stature, proportion, and strength. The clear recognition of this diversity of constitutional gifts leads us on to a further and a higher sphere of thought altogether. For whence does it arise, but from the will of God? Not alone is the condition of our marvellous nature altogether to be referred to His wisdom, but each man's speciality is to be referred to Him also. The birth of every human being is really an act of creation; and as the potter moulds the clay as he will, so the special constitution of different men is a part of God's providence, and of that sovereign electing will in which all things have their origin. We are what we are by natural constitution, because God has made us so. From this it further follows that the special constitution with which He has endowed each one of us is a

matter of special forethought and deliberate intention. God does not bestow His gifts broadcast, as a sower may sow his seed, leaving it to fall casually where and how it will; there can be nothing accidental to the omniscience of God, nothing unconscious to His wisdom. The same mind which has arranged the multitudinous objects which make up the completeness of the natural *cosmos*, is equally precise in the world of mind and of morals. Each preacher's gifts vary according to the deliberate counsel and purpose of God.

The reason why God calls men to one and the same function of preaching, indefinitely diverse from each other in character and gifts, lies up to a certain point readily within our knowledge. The diversity is not confined to preachers, but extends through all human society. It is to be found among men of every profession, every occupation, every class. It is therefore to be found in every congregation. We cannot follow it out into details and individuals; but in every group of men there must be some prevailing disposition and character known to the eye of God. Speaking generally, it is clearly necessary that there should be a sympathy between a preacher and those to whom he preaches, not alone in object, but in feeling and disposition; a sympathy, not an identity, corresponding to the sympathy which adapts husband and wife to each other, and which constitutes the

closer tie because it is a sympathy, but not an identity. It is indisputable that some persons find a special delight and a peculiar profit in the ministry of certain preachers. Why but because of the similarity of mental habitude and gift? A stereotyped monotony of gifts in preachers would evidently put the pulpit out of sympathy with the infinite varieties of human thought and feeling. God bestows a variety of gifts upon preachers, simply because He has bestowed a variety of gifts upon hearers.

We trace this in three particulars. In the first place, as I have already said, the natural gift, or balance of gifts, must be referred to the will of God. In the second place, the inward call which alone constitutes a man's fitness for Holy Orders, comes also from the will of God, working by His Spirit. This call indisputably is given to some, not to all; and surely to these particular persons, not accidentally, but of God's deliberate intention. He chooses those whom He will call, and He calls knowingly and intentionally men of the widest possible variety of endowments: men of very moderate mental powers, and men of the highest genius and the noblest capacities; men of the calmest temperaments, and men of the most burning zeal; men of logical faculties, and men of the richest fancy and the most gorgeous imagination; men of the most eager energy and a laboriousness that never tires, and men of the acutest

sensibility and the most delicate sympathies. Poets, philosophers, historians, critics, orators, administrators, divines, all follow the bent of their genius, and all are called of God. It seems plain as the sunshine that He calls all because He has need of all, and is pleased to use them all as the earthly instruments of His mighty Spirit in the conversion of the world, and in the edification of the Church.

But I must add a third thing. God not only endows the men, not only calls them, so endowed, but He likewise places them in their respective spheres of work. This follows from the doctrine of a particular Providence. It appears to me as unreasonable to admit a general providence and to deny a particular one, as it would be to admit that human skill made a watch, and yet to deny that it made all the parts of the watch. Nor is it irrelevant to remember that this providence is the providence of the great Head of the Church Himself, and is exercised by the nail-scarred hands of the Crucified. The constant language of Scripture affirms that everything is divinely ordered. God killeth and maketh alive. He putteth down and setteth up. He casts our lines in fair places, and orders the bounds of our habitation. He counts the very hairs on the heads of His people, and makes all things to work together for good to them that love Him. If there be any one who more than others may expect the details of his



life to be ordered by God, and his place and work fixed by His will, it is the minister of the Gospel, "the man of God," as Scripture calls him, "the fellow-worker with Christ Jesus," as the Apostle designates him, "the ambassador of Christ," the pastor who is set to "watch for souls." Let us realize the truth, and fix our faith upon it, till from a set of phrases it goes into an actual living reality; and does it not follow that our place and ministry are ordered for us by our Lord? and if so, that they are ordered wisely and well, and with an exact adaptation of our special gifts to the special work we are called to do? It does not seem to me that the complicated arrangements of our Church patronage, or even the intervention of private purchase, ought to hide from our eyes the full recognition of His will, for whose providence nothing is too minute, for whose wisdom nothing is too complex, and for whose power nothing is too difficult.

I am not insensible to the embarrassments which beset this truth. It does not seem to us that the right man always gets into the right place, or that God's ministers always fill the posts for which they are best adapted. The enormous waste of strength and misapplication of energy in the Church of England is a matter of common remark. It cannot be denied that the distribution of patronage is far indeed from reaching an ideal perfection. It seems



sometimes as if human hands had turned the proper order of things upside down. I cannot deny that human selfishness, covetousness, interest, and ambition are mysteriously permitted sadly and largely to interfere with the providential guidance of the Great Head. It is part of the deep mystery of evil, that profound question from the very confines of which the highest human intellect falls back baffled. We can but refer it to His will, whose judgments are a great deep, unfathomable to human thought. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?"

Yet it must be admitted that from some points of view the actual system which determines men's spheres in the Church, deeply marked as it is with traces of human ignorance, yet works on the whole wonderfully well. It may lead us to suspect that things are not really so bad as we think them to be. Men's work is divinely ordered, and the right men are placed in the right sphere, to a far greater degree than we are apt to recognise. I hastily suggest some considerations which may tend a good deal to move away the clouds which darken the eye of faith and conceal the manifest traces of the footsteps of God.

In the first place, we must charge much of what is real in this apparent disorder on our lack of simple self-surrender to the will of our Master. In heart

and conscience we do really believe in the overruling guidance of His wisdom, and yet practically, when we come to deal with the actual details of our life, we often feel and think and determine as if we disbelieved it. No doubt the recognition of any express guidance is sometimes difficult and perplexing ; but does not the perplexity often arise from a lack of the full courage of faith ? God's providence must be interpreted by the key supplied by His Word. We honestly endeavour to read it thus, and with earnest prayer seek to know what is the will of God concerning us. Well, then, should we not be content to trust Him ? Should we not rest in the assurance that He has guided us aright, and avoid that fidgety anxiety of conscience with which we often worry ourselves out of our peace ? We may have done quite right, when we fancy that we have done quite wrong. It appears to me that our confidence in a providential guidance may be the more implicit, in proportion as the course we have adopted differs from our own preconceived wishes and long-formed plans. When we allow our minds to dwell long on any favourite wishes of our own, we are very apt to form our own providence, and to mistake the *ignis fatuus* of a human fancy for the clear star of heaven. The wise rule of Cecil was that no man should move to a new sphere of work till he found his path closed up behind, as well

as opened before. If we prayerfully seek to be guided by God, why should we doubt that we are actually guided by God?

But further, the apparent unfitness of our gifts for the special post in which we are set to preach the word of life, may arise from a lack of earnestness and honesty in the use of these gifts. Many of us must charge ourselves with not doing our best. The weekly sermons are rather considered as a task to be done, than as an honour to be enjoyed. They become a perfunctory act of duty to be got over and done somehow; and hence the true aim and mission of the preacher is forgotten. There is a coldness and deadness, a want of life and animation, a lack of pleasure and happy effort, alike in the preparation and in the delivery. The soul is not stirred by its work, and what wonder that the latent gifts are not called into exercise? There are few preachers who have not to lay this to their conscience, that we become in the pulpit a kind of cold and artificial selves, and not what God meant and made us to be. We should feel this the more, because the ultimate cause of it is a want of love, and of zeal and spiritual life. The fire is not kindled with the live coals of the Spirit, or kept burning by prayer and meditation. We blame God for giving us a work for which we are unfitted, and yet the unfitness may be solely in our own selves—not in

the absence of gifts, but in the non-use of them. We allow the sword to grow rusty in its scabbard, and what wonder if the edge be blunt, and the arm that should wield it stiff and awkward?

But further, we mistake the results of our own work, and think our ministry less effective than it probably is. Partly it arises from the wisdom of God, who does not permit us to see all the fruit of our labours; for it may be that we are too weak to bear the consciousness of success, and might lose our power in the complacent contemplation of it. Partly it is because our ignorance is hasty and impatient, and measures results rather by the three-score years and ten of him who plants and waters than by the eternity of Him who gives the increase. Partly it is because we do not expect enough, but, resting in the punctual discharge of a fixed duty, neither ask a blessing nor expect an answer.

And, last of all, our own ignorance may grossly mistake things, and may imagine an unfitness in the preacher's gifts in the very instances where the deep wisdom of our God has most exactly adapted them to their work. The conditions with which God deals in the world of spirit, as well as in the world of matter, are much too complex and intricate, and reach too far and too wide, for us to be able to measure them. We may possibly be lamenting the inadequacy of a preacher's gifts, when they are in



fact the very gifts best adapted to the state of the spiritual life of those to whom he preaches. For instance, I can readily conceive that, when some preacher of extraordinary gifts has occupied a pulpit, there may be produced by the very splendour of his eloquence a tendency to hero worship, or a peril of mistaking the cheap luxury of religious emotion for the real power and force of the Spirit of God, or a disposition to rely too much on the outward ordinance, and too little on the inward power, which might, under the continuance of such a ministry, be dangerous to the growth of the divine life. Or, I can understand that a partial and incomplete mode of viewing the truth of God may arise from the spiritual and intellectual habitudes of one preacher, which it may need the influence of different habitudes in another preacher to counterbalance and to correct. We may readily conceive a score of such instances, imaginary so far as the actual knowledge of individual cases is concerned, but not imaginary, rather most true and real, in the facts of the spiritual world. Let us not judge hastily, or measure with our ignorance the wisdom of the Most High. When He removes a great preacher, or silences with sickness the eloquent tongue on whose accents thousands hung entranced, or removes him from one sphere to another, and substitutes in his place a preacher of very different gifts, there may be good reasons for



it, deep as His wisdom, faultless as His omniscience, and gracious as His tender love for souls.

Thus, therefore, I fall back again on the great truth, to which I desire to give the utmost emphasis, that the gifts and the sphere of every preacher of the Word are wisely and exactly allotted by the great Head of the Church. He is a God of order, and in His counsels every servant of His has his place and work. He mistakes no facts, overlooks no conditions, miscalculates no results. To the human eye things may appear confused and disordered; but so it is apparently in nature. What a countless multitude of things go to make up the whole of the material world! and yet we know that each individual object is ordered by so exact an economy, that not a solitary drop of water is ever wasted, or a withered leaf stripped off by the autumn wind, which does not become the nutriment of some new form of life. Shall we think that God is less exact in grace than nature? Why, in every human organization, from the humblest workshop up to the complex organism of a human government, how nice a division of labour, how anxious an adaptation of each special gift to its own special work, extend throughout the whole! Shall God be less wise in the infinite and spiritual, than man in the finite and material? Shall the family of God be less precisely administered than the family of man? Shall the

government of the world unseen be less perfectly organised than the government of the seen? He who is most perfect of all in Himself must be most perfect of all in His actings. Object and intention pervade them all. Sight is baffled to trace Him as yet, whose ways are in the sea and His footsteps in the deep waters. But faith accepts, even now, as a most certain fact, the minuteness and perfection of that government which will be revealed to knowledge hereafter. It is as if God Himself came out of the darkness, and made Himself visible. Will it not be one of the joys of the better world to see the veil entirely removed, and to find in the workings of His wisdom, when we see them with the pure vision of the just made perfect, themes of praise and admiration for all eternity?

Lessons arise from this truth on every side, like beams of light from a central sun. Suffer me to point to the practical conclusions which arise from it.

1. In the first place, the preacher must endeavour to make the best of the gifts with which he is endowed. They are a great responsibility, and he will have to give account of them. He must not let them rust with disuse, or be lost from actual want of exercise. He must cultivate them to the utmost. I lay stress upon this, because I am conscious of a temptation to neglect the lessons of the wise and the plain results of experience, on the plea that we have gifts of only

one kind, and can only work in accordance with our own method. We are thus in danger of substituting our own inclination for the will of God. In one sense, it is quite true that a man must work according to his gifts; but if the plea be used as an excuse for not earnestly endeavouring to preach in the best and wisest way we can, it becomes quite untrue. All the gifts with which a preacher can possibly be endowed are amenable to the general principles by which the ministry should be directed. Let a man be gifted how he may, it does not do away with the duty of a conscious and prayerful effort to cultivate his preaching powers to the utmost. It does not supersede the responsibility of preaching a full gospel, and making known the whole revealed counsel of God; or the necessity of maintaining the proportion of faith, and presenting the plan of salvation in that relation and correspondence of doctrine with doctrine in which it is revealed to us in the Word. It does not render it needless to strive after simplicity of language and clearness of expression, so that into whatever direction your mental habitude may lead you, your style may neither be deformed by affectation, nor so embarrassed with technical terms or long compounds as to be not "understood of the people." It does not interfere with the cultivation of earnestness and simplicity of manner and voice, so that the preacher's soul may come out in his words,

and set other hearts on fire with his own enthusiasm. The quietest manner, when it is natural to a man, may be as earnest, and express as intense an emotion as the most excitable. Nor, lastly, does it touch the question of extempore or written discourses. I venture with great humility to express my own doubt, whether men not naturally gifted with utterance may not do more good, and become more moving and effective preachers, with the written sermon than without it; and I am quite sure that coldness and lifelessness of delivery are by no means the necessary conditions of a sermon preached from manuscript. At all events, if a man preaches extempore only to save himself trouble, and because he has not time to write, he is making a most grievous mistake. No speciality of gift can excuse the lack of prayerful and laborious cultivation, or justify indifference to the rules which great men of various ages have laid down for the guidance of the Christian preacher. We must seek to work up to the potentiality we feel to be in us. A preacher who is not doing his best, nor seeking ever to improve this best, is not doing his duty.

2. We should learn to be content with our special gifts, whatever may be either the degree, or the kind of endowments, which it has pleased the Master to bestow upon us. I do not refer so much to any feeling of envy at the higher or more brilliant powers



possessed by other men, or to any faithlessness in the use of our own powers because they are small in degree, and fitted rather for the quieter work of the Church than for its more illustrious opportunities. Increase of power is increase of responsibility. I am sure that we have all enough to answer for, without wishing to increase the burden. Nor is it always the most brilliant preacher who saves most souls; for the power that saves is not of man, but of God. I am not alluding to this, but I refer rather to the temptation of endeavouring to acquire gifts which we do not naturally possess. It may rise from the fascination exercised over us by some great preacher, our consciousness of the power and influence he wields, and a natural ambition to be like him; or it may arise involuntarily, and unconsciously to ourselves, from being brought under the influence of some distinguished orator, till we come, almost without being aware of it, to imitate his style and manner. The result is that we copy others. Such an act is most disastrous, and almost fatal, if not quite fatal, to successful preaching. For each man's style grows naturally out of his special qualities, and what is natural to him may be quite unnatural to another. There are men who can take apparent liberties in the pulpit, and without irreverence can allow themselves a freedom of speech which it would be suicidal in another man to imitate. All copying produces what



is artificial and affected ; it takes all the freshness and reality out of a preacher ; it is fatal to that transparent earnestness and honesty which, in the strong sympathy of one soul with another, is the greatest of all instruments of conviction ; it stiffens, hardens, chills. It puts the man upon stilts in the performance of a display, instead of placing the preacher foot to foot and heart to heart with his fellows,—one dying man pleading with dying men for very life in the name of the Lord. If there is one maxim which I venture more than any other to commend to each of my brethren, it is, that he should be himself—simply, honestly, naturally himself—just such as God made him, doing his own work in his own way, with his own gifts, and according to his own power, just as the Lord has “*divided to every man severally as He will.*”

But a practical question arises here, on which I must just say a few words. How is a man to recognize his own gifts, and so know in what direction or in what mode he is to work ? It is not easy even for hearers, unless they are endowed with a strong critical faculty, to discriminate very exactly the mental gifts of the preacher ; and for the preacher to do it himself is almost impossible. We may by grace learn the secrets of our own conscience, but rightly appraise and appreciate our own gifts we cannot. Yet we must not devolve it upon others to arrange the direc-

tion of our ministry,—we must do it ourselves; and how are we to attain that knowledge of our gifts, which seems to be the starting-point? I reply that we need not the knowledge at all. The less the preacher speculates about himself and his own gifts, the better. He has higher things to think of than the exact character of his own endowments. Let him try to do his work for his Master, and his gifts will determine their own direction and proportion surely enough. The characteristics of the man himself will become the characteristics of his work. Let him leave his constitution of intellect and temperament to develop itself, after its own laws, sure that his powers will come into exercise spontaneously. Or rather let him leave himself to the guidance of God the Holy Ghost, that He may mould the earthen vessel just as He will, pleased with what pleases Him, and not caring much whether his work be done in strength or weakness, in the sunshine or in the shadow, so that God is glorified and souls are saved.

3. But, lastly, there arises a caution from all this, well worthy of our attention. There should be no conscious effort after this gift of the preacher or after that; still less any attempt, conscious or unconscious, to copy the gifts of another. And yet a conscious effort there must be on the negative side, not to allow any of our gifts to run into license or to be extravagantly indulged. Some

knowledge of the special habitudes of our own minds we can scarcely help having. At all events, for the needful lesson of self-restraint, it is enough for us to know what kind of work we do most easily, most pleasantly to ourselves, and with the least mental and moral friction; for that is just the work over which the preacher needs most vigilantly to watch, and most sternly to discipline himself. Content with his own gifts, he is yet not to be content to let them have their own way, lest, like an unruly horse, they run away with him beyond all bounds. The very ease and pleasantness with which he exercises them should put him on his guard; for God's great law of labour extends throughout all human action, and we can expect no Divine blessing when there has been no holy and prayerful toil. I take, for instance, the power of language, the facile command of words. It is a great gift; sternly disciplined, and curbed by a severe propriety and cultivated taste, used as the vehicle for solid thought which has been got by honest thinking, it is a great gift,—a power fit for noble purposes, and worthy of all admiration. And yet, undisciplined, uncurbed, allowed to become a substitute for solid matter, practised as a fascinating kind of self-indulgence, it is about the most fatal to a preacher of all his possible faults. The placid orator goes on his own self-admiring way, uncon-

scious that sound has taken the place of sense, idle platitudes of solid truth, and that painful poverty of thought is peering all the while through that abundance of words, like a grinning skeleton through a mask of flowers. Or the truth may be illustrated in a much higher sphere. I take another gift of the preacher—the power of illustration. Again I say it is a great and enviable gift. Who has not been charmed and instructed by it? And yet, undisciplined and used to excess, it may not only clog and weary by its abundance, but it may even defeat the particular object for which it is used. I take that distinguished and eminent preacher, the late Dr. Guthrie, as an example. In some of his works the vivid power of illustration is charming; but in others, and I think in his later sermons, it ran palpably into excess. The illustration is so full and pictorial, so extended, so graphically elaborated, that it actually overlays and conceals the very truth it was intended to illustrate. The same thing is true even of the exuberant fertility of thought which distinguishes some men. The late Robert Montgomery has always appeared to me to be an example of this. His language is crowded with so many ideas, that they confuse each other. No one is worked out, because it is jostled so closely by another. The whole mental vision becomes indistinct, like a great phantas-



magoria, where a thousand images are blended together, till there are none left that are distinguishable. I have always thought that, if the excessive exuberance of his mind could have been severely curbed and rigidly disciplined, he would have been both a truly great poet, and one of the most distinguished of preachers. If there be one part of our faculties that needs to be checked, it is that part which we have most natural pleasure in exercising. We may have been only gratifying ourselves, and worshipping our own net, when we fondly, but falsely, thought that we were glorifying God. The preacher must deny himself, that he may become a polished shaft in the hands of the Spirit. He must forget himself, that his Master may be all in all.





## Study in its bearing on Preaching.

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## VIII.

### *STUDY IN ITS BEARING ON PREACHING.*

THE preaching of the Gospel, as being the delivery of a message of God to man, must address itself to every faculty of man's spiritual nature. It must enlighten the understanding in its power of discerning truth; it must quicken the imagination in its intuition of beauty; it must guide the conscience to discover the law of right; it must inspire the heart to realize unity by love. I do not mean that these appeals can be separated from one another. For, after all, the spirit of man is one; and the presentation to it of any word of God—such, for example, as the message of Christ crucified or Christ risen—must necessarily affect the whole. What is a light to the understanding and the imagination will act as a kindling fire on the moral aspirations and affections. But still these various influences of the Word of God may be distinguished for the sake of clearness of conception. And, speaking generally, they are distinguished in Holy Scripture by being classed under two divisions. The effect of the preach-

ing of the Gospel on the intellect, and perhaps the imagination, is the διδασκαλία, the element of teaching; the effect on the conscience and affections is the παράκλησις, the element of exhortation. St. Paul (1 Tim. iv. 13) would bid us give heed to both. Both seem to him to form the natural sequel of the public ἀνάγνωσις or proclamation of the Holy Scripture itself. Both require that preparation of "study," to which I am to direct attention.

It is, however, for teaching that study is especially needful. Even for παράκλησις—for the appeal to conscience and affection—the practice of all great orators seems to show that some study, that is, some previous deliberate thought, is more needful than is commonly supposed. It gathers, so to speak, the store of raw material, on which the occasion of the moment stamps suddenly the impression needed. But probably, in this department of preaching, infinitely more depends on the other elements—I mean the practical and devotional elements—of the preacher's own spiritual life. Study, though it has its place, must be content with a very subordinate position. It will be convenient therefore, after this short caution against too rigid a restriction of its influence, to direct our thoughts to the other element of teaching, on which study tells with far greater power.

Suffer me to plead, in passing, for a very distinct



recognition of this didactic element in our preaching. In days gone by it may have been excessive; in our own days it is obvious that many other forms of teaching share with the pulpit what was once its peculiar function. But still I cannot but think, first, that there is a large didactic power in the pulpit, which—whatever be its inherent defects—nothing can supersede, nothing can rival. To the poor and the uneducated it is still almost all; few true ideas of any kind are presented to their minds, except through the preaching which they hear. Even to those who can read and do read for themselves there is a power in the spoken word, and in the reverent attention necessarily given to it in church, which the same word written does not command. If, therefore, the element of teaching be lost or overborne in the pulpit, it will not be adequately supplied elsewhere. And yet, in the next place, I cannot help fearing that there is a tendency now-a-days to rely too exclusively on the *παράκλησις*. The one praise of sermons is that they are “hearty,” “stirring,” “earnest,” “affectionate.” There is a temptation to what may truly be called the “sensational”—that is, as I understand the word, to what will tell on the imagination and the affections, without requiring any effort of thought and any strain of attention. Men seem to be afraid of making the old appeal of the Apostle, “I speak as unto wise men: judge ye what

I say." Doctrine, as doctrine, it is thought, should be relegated to the essay or the lecture: it is enough if the sermon rouses the conscience and warms the heart. I do not mean that there are not noble witnesses against this tendency. But I think that the tendency is sufficiently common to need a passing protest. I would address such a protest earnestly to my younger brethren in the ministry. Christianity, be it remembered, is a religion based on facts, and animated by living principles. To those facts sermons must bear constant witness, as did St. Peter's first sermon on the day of Pentecost. Those principles sermons must draw out and exhibit, as did St. Paul's sermon on Mars' Hill. In both these functions the element of teaching must lay the basis, on which the power of exhortation is to build up its superstructure. We need not, indeed, always be going down to the foundations. But when asked on what the building is based, we must answer the question; and it will not be sufficient to point to the magnificence of its architecture, the perfection of its plan, or the beauty of its design.

In the light of this consideration, then, especially, though not exclusively, I speak of "study in its bearing upon preaching." I shall try to consider it under two divisions. Let me speak of study, first, as supplying the material from which preaching draws, and next, as directing the process and the method

of the preaching itself. The former is perhaps my proper subject; and to it, therefore, I shall devote the main part of my paper. It will be sufficient to say a few words in conclusion upon the latter subject.

Consider exactly what study is. By study I understand the deliberate and concentrated application of the mind, first, in its perceptive intelligence, to receive ideas; next, in its power of reflection upon them, to test them individually, and to harmonize them with one another; thirdly, in its impulse to reproduce them with the stamp of our own thought upon them, possibly, to advance beyond them in the ceaseless work of human discovery. This is study. I pray you to observe that these elements of its perfection may be found both in small things and in great—in the five minutes' thought we bestow on a trifle, as well as in the days and nights which we may give to some profound investigation. They are, moreover, (excepting perhaps the last) within the reach of almost all minds—certainly of all fairly educated minds; they are arms which may be wielded, and ought to be wielded, by the rank and file of the vast army of human kind, as well as by the few great champions who are born to lead.

Now, in actual life, especially in the life of advanced civilization, the difficulty of study—supposing that the duty of study and even its necessity be recognised—lies in the “embarrassment of riches,”

in the infinite variety of subjects which claim it at our hands. It is very hard to steer between the Scylla of narrow limitation, necessarily distorting the mental growth, and the Charybdis of superficiality, so diluting the natural energies that there is no vigorous growth at all. But we find usually that in all vocations there is a recognition, both of what is called liberal culture, coming from the studies which belong to man as man, and of what we call technical study, bearing upon the particular calling of each man in life. To balance these is difficult; to lay down any law of balance impossible. But the general result, to which men roughly come, is this,—that the two should always co-exist, but that in early days the general should prevail over the technical, in later days the technical over the general.

Now, I do not much like speaking of the ministry as a mere profession, still less can I call the studies that belong to it “technical,”—in the rigid sense in which I might apply the word to the studies of an engineer or a lawyer. But, nevertheless, I think that the general rule applies here.

Accordingly I hold, first, that if we would be efficient ministers, as preachers of the Word, we must recognise in their right degree those applications of study which belong to us simply as educated men and as Englishmen of this nineteenth century. It has always been judged an unspeakable



advantage, that at the Universities and elsewhere the education of our clergy has had a broad liberal basis, which prevents them from being a separate caste, and guards them from the danger of losing sympathy with other vocations of men, all of which may be ministries of God, with other manifestations of that Truth, which must be in its essential lines and its ultimate foundation one. Surely what is thus universally recognised in respect to our preparatory training, should have its counterpart in the study which runs afterwards through our whole ministerial life. There should be in it due recognition of thoughts, movements, aspirations, lying outside our distinctly clerical work. A minister of Christ is a man; in proportion as he follows his Master, he must be the truest of men; and the time-honoured sentiment, "*Nihil humani a me alienum puto*," ought to be infinitely more congenial to his mind, as a Christian free man, than it was to the mind of the most cultivated heathen slave. They say that no man is a good theologian who is nothing but a theologian. But certainly no man can be a good preacher to men, who has no care for, no thought of, the main ideas, whether intellectual or moral, social or political, which are dominant in men's minds. If the Church is to bear upon the home and the workshop of life, the thoughts of the home and the workshop must be not unrecognised in the Church. Never yet in the



history of our Church have the clergy failed to show understanding, even to exercise leadership, in various fields of thought. I trust that the time of such failure will never come.

But still life is short, and powers are limited. In our vocation, most of all, we feel every day more and more the need of concentration on that which is our special duty as preachers—the declaration of the Word of God to man. To this we are bound by our solemn ordination vows; to this we are driven, if we are in earnest, by the necessities of daily experience. Other studies we may take up *ἐκ παρέργου*; in them we may find at once the relaxation of change, enlargement of mind, cross-lights of manifold illustration, thrown upon our own peculiar work in life. But the study of the Word of God in the largest sense is our true work. Its proclamation is the one *differentia* of our preaching, through which a sermon differs from an essay, an oration, or a lecture.

Where shall we read that Word of God? There is an old division which is true enough. There are three books—the Book of Nature, the Book of Humanity, the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Remember that in one and all, though in the last infinitely above all, we read the Word of God. If the teaching of Holy Scripture itself be true, we cannot give up the other two books as

secular. In each there is the handwriting of God for those who have eyes to see.

The Book of Nature,—I delight in the phrase, because it asserts that in this wonderful system there is a handwriting, and a handwriting surely implies a hand. There it lies, always unrolled, before the intuition of imagination, and the investigation of science. In regard to the former, all ages are much on a level ; in regard to the latter, God's providence has ordained that in our generation a new flood of light has been thrown upon His Book, so that each day more of its secrets are deciphered, and yet, by each deciphering, new mysteries, yet unread, are made visible to us. If God has so ordered it, and if by His permission the ideas derived from such discovery have profoundly affected the spirit of the age, it cannot be right that the preachers of His Word should turn their eyes away from it. We must come to it—be it acknowledged at once—with a foregone conclusion, based upon knowledge derived from other sources, that there is the hand of God in it, and that we may hope to see its traces. Just as the physicist, entering on any new field of study, takes it for granted that law must exist and may be discoverable, so we, believing in God, know that He is there, and hope that we may see the skirts at least of His majesty. We enter it with a protest on our lips against the belief that there is nothing in

things physical, which physical investigation cannot discover, just as we accept the existence of life as a fact, although no microscope or scalpel can discover its secret. And, moreover, when we study the Book of Nature, we do so not as mere physicists, but as ministers of the Gospel. We care not greatly to read any word there, if it be not a word of God.

But still, with these physical investigations going on around us, affecting men's whole habits of thought, touching at every point on the frontiers of metaphysics and theology, I do think that, as preachers of the Word of God, we should study such results as have been definitely obtained, and not pass by the methods of thought which this physical philosophy has made, for good or for evil, familiar to every educated man. How can a man, for instance, speak of prayer and of God's special providence in total ignorance of what science has taught us of the reign of law? How can he call men to adore the creative wisdom, with no notion of the new views of that wisdom, which the theory (for example) of evolution suggests? How can he expound the book of Genesis, without any consideration of the light thrown upon the object and method of its teaching by what science has discovered of the visible traces of creation? These conceptions, observe, are not buried in learned treatises; they are in all men's mouths; the very air is full of them. We cannot ignore them

in the church. We are not, I freely admit, to turn our pulpits into chairs of science, to substitute the history of nature for the history of salvation. But by what we say—and let me add, by what we do not say—we ought to show some study of the Book of Nature, with such lights as science has kindled below, and with the supreme light of the Sun of Righteousness from above. As long as Septuagesima and Trinity read us the story of Creation, and the Benedicite, like a grand respond, calls on “All the works of the Lord to praise Him and magnify Him for ever,” such study cannot be foreign to the preaching of the Word of God.

Then there is the Book of Humanity, in which history has recorded the deeds, in which literature and language have embodied the thoughts, of men. In it, far more vividly than in Nature, the handwriting of God ought to be read. The study of it, I believe—modern fashion notwithstanding—to be infinitely higher and closer to us than the study of Nature. I cannot, therefore, regret that the education of our clergy is more largely concerned with it. Here once more, in respect of self-consciousness and the experience of life, all ages are much on a level in the school of humanity. But in relation to what is more commonly termed study, we can hardly doubt that the power of literature in general, and of the historical methods of thought and inves-



tigation in particular, in relation to facts, opinions, religious faiths of ages past, is wonderfully increased in our days. The power of literary production is prolific to a fault; the sphere of its influence has greatly widened, even if to some degree at the expense of its depth. I cannot conceive that a man can speak to his fellow-men with full persuasiveness, who is altogether ignorant of the currents which are actually swaying and directing their thoughts. A preacher must not only think, but read. Of course, here again remembering his work, he should read with a view not to what is merely human, but to what in literature is the word of God, heard through all human voices, and underlying all human peculiarities. Nothing is to my mind more repulsive than the sermon which is a mere *pasticcio* of quotations, perhaps from every book except the Bible, in which the unity and massiveness of God's message are lost. Nothing is more pitiful than the sermon which is a mere reflexion of the literature of the day, popular or profound, with no higher light in it, and no Divine centre to which all is to be referred. But still, so far as men speak what is good and true and beautiful, it is God who speaks in them. How often do we recognise, as even the stern Tertullian recognised, in those who do not speak as Christians, the "*testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ*"! How often are we startled



to find them not far from the kingdom of God—nearer it, perhaps, than we! How often have they taught us, even by the vehemence of their protests, the value of parts of the gospel itself, which we had forgotten or depreciated! A preacher, I grant, should study the book of humanity in the light of his own self-consciousness and in the priceless revelations of pastoral experience; but he should find time for some study of men's written thoughts, taking care that it is study, and not mere idle reception of ideas, and that the time and thought which he can spare be given to a few books well chosen, rather than be diffused, and by diffusion wasted, over many.

But you will anticipate that I speak of these two lower books of God, only to lead up to the Book of Books, the Revelation of Jesus Christ. We hold that book to be the key to the books of Nature and of Humanity, bringing out plainly and distinctly what in them is often veiled in a magnificent vagueness, interpreting into human language what speaks in them like the voice of the thunders of the Apocalypse. Our ultimate difference with the thoughtful unbeliever is, that with him the *vox Dei* is the *vox Populi*, the matured and collective wisdom of humanity; while we, refusing not that voice, yet hold the clear articulate *vox Christi* to be the true *vox Dei*—the dominant note which is intelligible

alone, but without which the others are but confused and unmeaning.

It is wholly needless to plead in the abstract for the study of Holy Scripture, and yet we can hardly listen to sermons without feeling that our practice is greatly defective. Look first at the Holy Scripture itself. The Bible is read; it is textually known; its Divine maxims rise to our thoughts and lips; its language colours every expression. But it is not always studied, either in its parts or as a whole, with the reverent concentration of thought which the Word of God must claim. You may note this even in isolated passages. How often sermons turn wholly on misunderstanding of texts! I suppose that every one has heard earnest addresses on the "*Almost* thou persuadest me to be a Christian." I once heard a sermon, excellent in itself, on the "seeing through a glass darkly," in which the preacher dwelt on the effect of an intervening medium to obscure and colour the light, forgetting that in St. Paul's actual words there is nothing about glass and nothing about darkness. Scores of preachers, in the controversy on justification, have quoted the maxim, "Whatever is not of faith is sin," without thinking for a moment what the context shows its obvious meaning to be.

But infinitely more common, infinitely more serious, is the utter defect in knowledge of what

I may call the structure of Holy Scripture. We hold the Bible, in spite of the vast differences of its parts, as regards age and authorship, to be a whole—as we commonly say, an “organic whole”—in which no two parts are absolutely alike, and all the parts bear upon each other and upon the whole. But yet how seldom do we find in preachers clear signs of a familiar knowledge of this Divine structure! If a doctrine is to be set forth from Scripture, how often we hear texts poured out one after another from a Concordance! how seldom do we find a deliberate attempt to trace out its development in the actual order of God’s dispensation, which is, be it observed, a part of the Revelation itself! And again, though perhaps less frequently, yet still far too often, we hear a text dwelt upon without any distinct reference to the context,—without, for example, any recognition of the great subject of the book in which it occurs, and the light which this throws on the particular utterance of the text. I confess that these things seem to me unpardonable, because they imply a neglect of the study, properly so called, of the Word of God.

I have spoken here of Holy Scripture itself; yet may I not add a plea for the study also of that which bears on its interpretation? The Bible did not fall down, as one book, or a series of books,

from heaven. In respect of the Gospel itself, we need occasionally a more thoughtful consideration of the true method of Divine Revelation,—of the relation of the written word of the Bible to the embodied grace of God in what we call the Church. Men seem to forget that the Church existed as a widely spread and organized body, based upon Apostolic doctrine, animated by Apostolic inspiration, before the New Testament as a whole existed. True, that in the New Testament we have the ultimate authority of all things necessary to salvation; but is it not clear that the history of the deeds and thoughts of the Church must necessarily bear powerfully on the interpretation of Scripture? The Acts of the Apostles is the first book of Church history. Must not the germs, sown by Apostolic hands, have unfolded themselves in ages to come? The theology of the Church, embodied in her creeds, her liturgies, her doctors, her councils, is simply the product of the thought of Christian centuries, pondering the fundamental teaching of Christ and His Apostles. Can it be valueless in its interpretation of that teaching? Yet preachers too often feel no shame, perhaps even pride themselves, in an ignorance which betrays itself only too plainly, to all who have studied the Bible, remembering how God actually gave it.

We in the Church of England can plead no



excuse, either for neglect of the actual history of the Revelation of Christ, or for the contempt of systematic theology. Our Prayer Book, our Creeds, our Articles are witnesses against us, if we fall into either. There are times when it may be well for a moment to put all aside, in order to be, so to speak, face to face with Holy Scripture, and with it alone. But when we have done this, then it is well to compare these our own impressions in their freshness with what history and theology have long matured. Often we find that what seems to us a new original light, destined to shed a fresh radiance on the world, is a conception which in the past has been tried and found wanting. Often, when this is not so, and when there remains after due test a new word of God to ourselves, still the comparison with what has been of old will purify it from excrescence, and will deepen its essential power.

It is for this kind of study also that there is need to plead in days which rightly exalt exegesis, but too much depreciate systematic theology.

These defects in the study of Holy Scripture are due to many causes, over and above the natural indolence of men in the search after truth. Something is due to early familiarity with Holy Scripture, in the days when we can seize on parts and cannot grasp the whole; something to the use of



it in the Church Service, in which it necessarily appears piecemeal; but perhaps most of all is due to the want of a distinction between the devotional study of Holy Scripture as a part of our daily worship and "inquiry of God," and the thorough critical study, which every one who is to be a teacher must give to the subject of his teaching. The one must be fragmentary; so only can we gather up, day by day, the crumbs of His Word for ourselves. The other must be continuous; the work of each day, if it be but a few verses, must be thorough in itself, and part of a gradual accumulation of treasure. By the one we assimilate, if I may so say, the tone and spirit of God's Word for the element of the *παράκλησις*; by the other we grasp its revelation, so far as it can be grasped, for the basis of our *διδασκαλία*. Each has its priceless value; both are spoilt, if they be allowed to run into each other.

But, whatever be the cause, I cannot but feel that in these days we must urge study on our preachers. Of the three elements of spiritual life, the element of devotional earnestness (thank God!) has been marvellously revived; the element of practical activity for good has had, if possible, an even greater revival: but the intellectual element has not kept pace. Of all our wants, the greatest is of a profound theology, capable of assimilating

our great advances in discovery of truth, capable of answering, or showing to be unanswerable, the urgent inquiries, moral, social, and spiritual, which are imperiously pressing on the Church.

I may be told that I hold up an impossible ideal. But I am not so foolish as to suppose that the whole field of study can be covered by any one man; nor am I ignorant that the degree of power of study must vary infinitely with talents, age, and opportunity. But if we are to teach, we must learn; and each according to our measure we may learn, if we will. Let us only be strongly possessed with the truth that it is not enough to work and to feel—that it is a sacred duty to think—and we shall find both the time and the way. Two or three hours in the early morning, jealously reserved from even the most sacred occupations, and systematically used, will do wonders. For each has his own function in teaching. If our powers and opportunities be small, let this be wisely narrowed. Whatever we teach, let it be what we have tried to know. Where we have no time to think, let us not presume to speak.

Now, with regard to this study, I cannot advise—what I have sometimes heard urged—that in all our study we should constantly have before us the thought of preaching, and should always be reading with a view to reproduction. This seems to me a

vicious system, something like what we call "cramming"—that is, reading with a view to examination, and not to intrinsic knowledge. All study, which is to be worth anything, must concern itself with truth, and truth alone. If we can master any part of God's truth under His blessing, it will be sure to tell upon our proclamation of His Word. There is a great difference between speaking out of what we have read, and reading up what we have got to speak. I do not say that, if we are pondering beforehand the subjects of our preaching, there will not be a natural tendency to assimilate all that we are studying. But this natural assimilation is one thing; the artificial forcing of our study into a groove is altogether another.

And this leads me on by a natural transition to the second kind of study, of which I need speak only briefly—the study to be bestowed on the form and substance of what we preach.

Here again, in the outset, let me plead for something higher than the consideration of what will be effective, what will strike the majority of our hearers. For if we may judge by the popularity and the actual influence of preachers, this standard will be an uncertain and unsatisfactory one. We must consider, of course, our congregation, and strive for what will be within their reach. I might urge, however that true simplicity needs the greatest

previous thought, and that every sermon, if it contains much for the many, should also contain something for the few. But I prefer to put forward the thought that what we are to speak is God's message, and that we should devote to it our very best—just as ancient artists, working in a religious spirit, would carry out their work to perfection, even if no eyes of men were likely to rest upon it. This is the wisest, the noblest, and yet the humblest, principle of study. Let our hearers be few and simple, still it is to God that we give account for what we speak.

Holding, then, that on what we are to preach we should bestow the best study which we can give, I proceed to inquire how that study is best bestowed. And here I would urge giving our chief time and pains to the careful thinking out of the substance of our preaching. Perhaps the hardest part of our work is to choose that subject, and to know what God would have us speak. For this we need the most thoughtful study; for this the most earnest prayer. There are many helps: to Churchmen the order of the Christian year, the beautiful series of the Lections and the Psalms, are simply invaluable. But happily there is no unbending rule, saving us the trouble of thinking. Each must consider for himself—What does God put into my heart? what does His providence over the life of my people demand? Probably



many preachers know the experience of frequent perplexity on this matter, and the sudden relief when, after long thought and prayer, it flashes on the mind—This, then, is what I must say; this is the word which the Lord would have me speak.

When this is done, then comes the next, not less important, stage of study. The subject must be well thought out, well worked out, before we even think of actual composition. Necessarily the study must begin in Holy Scripture, with those aids to its interpretation of which I have spoken. But when this is secured, I would urge a glance at least at the other two books of God,—to see whether, as Hooker puts it, the law supernatural, while it transcends the natural, does not harmonize with it, and is not illustrated by it, and to try whether the study of humanity, either in books or in the experience of the week, may not contribute something to the same needful illustration. But in whatever way we study, the subject of our sermon, as a complete whole, should be fashioned out, moulded, proportioned in our minds. It is impossible to give too much of our time and thought here.

But when we come to the actual composition of the sermon, I am inclined to think that, for the sake of energy and freshness in the word spoken, it is good that within limits it be rapid. My own consideration and experience lead me to recognise cha-



racteristic advantages both in the sermon written and the sermon in which the words are really extemporary. They do not recommend the sermon delivered *memoriter*, which, however, is, I know, sanctioned by high authority. But in whatever way we compose, I do not think that for our ordinary sermons it is good to compose slowly and elaborately. What we gain in abstract perfection, we are apt to lose in energy and life. In many instances, when we complain that sermons are not sufficiently studied, it is rather that study is misplaced—too much bestowed on the words, too little on the thought—too much on the parts, too little on the whole.

It may be asked, "Is there not frequent necessity for speaking without study on the spur of the moment? Are not sudden inspirations occasionally the fullest of energy and of fruit?" Undoubtedly; but it is the habit of study in general which gives such readiness and clearness of mind as may enable us to dispense with it in exceptional cases. What we think to be sudden flashes of thought are often the final outcome of long silent gatherings of force.

It may be said again, "After all, we must consider what is possible for the mass of men amidst all the distractions of other work. Is not the ideal held up rather too wide or too high for practice?" It may be so; but, after all, we must have a high ideal, if we are to have even a moderate practical standard.

If we know that we must study as a solemn duty, we shall find time and thought for it. For those young in the ministry, especially for those in deacons' orders, the remedy in case of such difficulties, perhaps, lies not in preaching without study, but in preaching less often than we do, or in varying preaching by catechetical lecture, and by that exposition of continuous passages of Scripture, which I cannot but think to be far too much neglected in the Church of England. Nor, with the example of the old use of the Homilies before us, can I help thinking that occasionally to bring before our people the sermons of others, provided that it be avowedly done, and that we take pains thoroughly to master their substance and their spirit, might relieve both them and us.

But I must conclude. It is needless to say that the subject is very far from being exhausted. I shall be satisfied if I have suggested a few thoughts, a few cautions, drawn mostly from my own experience. It will not, I am sure, be supposed that, in dwelling upon the need of study, I institute any comparison whatever between it and the value of practical experience and of devotional life. It will, I trust, be still less supposed that I forget that the true revelation can come only from Him who is the Word of God, believed in and known by ourselves, and that the inspiration which moves ourselves and others is

simply the breath of the Holy Spirit. The question is, How shall we receive the revelation? How shall we catch the inspiration from on high?

There is the way of doing. "If any man will do the will of my Father, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." There is the way of prayer, which St. Paul, in the Ephesian Epistle, took for himself and his disciples, that through it they might "know that which passeth knowledge." I urge also that there is the way of study, wrapping our face in the mantle of spiritual thought, that we may go out and stand before the Lord, and listen to the still small voice, heard only by those who have ears to hear.



The Study of Holy Scripture with a view to the  
Preparation of Sermons.

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## IX.

### THE STUDY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE WITH A VIEW TO THE PREPARATION OF SERMONS.

“*BONUS textuarius bonus theologus.*” If that means that a man who can skilfully analyse texts of Scripture and marshal them in array to prove doctrines is a good theologian, I must be permitted to question the truth of the aphorism. If it means that one who has a mastery of the text of Scripture as the great storehouse from which all theology is drawn is a good theologian, there can be no question as to the truth. But would it be equally true to say *Bonus textuarius bonus concionator?* Not perhaps without some limitation. For the preacher needs other qualifications besides knowledge even of Scripture: he needs keenness and point, wealth of illustration and force of diction, the glowing imagination, and above all the burning heart, if he is to strike home to the hearts and consciences of his hearers. Still it is certain that the preacher ought to be a theologian; for a very essential part of his office is to teach. I think it is George Herbert who says that

the object of a sermon is twofold—"to inform and to inflame." It is the object, I suppose, which every good speaker sets before him, whatever the topic of his discourse, to inform first, to explain and unfold his meaning, to convince the understanding, and then, having secured this vantage ground, thence to make his appeals to the affections. This is indisputably the essential character of all good preaching. But then it is no less certain that the source whence we are to draw our instruction is Holy Scripture. For ministers of the Church of England there can be no question on this point. Our Church sends us at our Ordination, not to Fathers or Councils, not to ponderous tomes of mediæval learning, or to compendious systems of theology, but to Holy Scripture itself as our main and constant study. We bind ourselves to this study as the work of our lives. We engage to teach nothing to our congregations but what is to be found in, or may be gathered from, Holy Scripture. I am afraid that we are not always sufficiently mindful of our obligation in this respect. No reasonable man would, of course, wish to see a clergyman cast aside all other studies. General literature, history, poetry, science, fiction, may all contribute to enrich his mind, and to give breadth to his conceptions and strength to his study of the Word of God. But no other pursuits, no other part of his ministerial work, ought to draw him away from his first and proper study.

If this study be neglected, nothing else can take the place of it; our sermons *must* grow thin and poor, and we shall send our hearers empty away, if we think it enough to take the customary text, and to divide it in the customary style, and to fill up our divisions out of our own emptiness, or out of the crude ill-digested supply which we have hastily gathered from some favourite treasure-house.

We are all accustomed to hear a great deal about the dulness, the insipidity, the verbiage, the platitudes of the pulpit. Charges made in the sweeping style in which our critics indulge we may be sure are often unjust, and I am persuaded that when men cry out that sermons are uninteresting, the fault is in the hearer as well as, sometimes perhaps more than, in the preacher. But having said this, I am also bound to say that there is one element in our sermons which might be made much more prominent than it is, and that is the element of instruction. A friend of mine, a distinguished layman in the University of Cambridge, once said to me, "There is one thing we want, one thing we miss in sermons, and that is instruction." I am persuaded he is right. If we would take pains to teach our people out of the Scriptures, if instead of supposing we have discharged our duty when we have picked out a text, and hung upon it a sermon which perhaps has very little to do with the text, if it is not a complete misrepresentation of the

text,—if instead of this mode of manufacturing sermons, we were really to strive to ascertain, and bring out, and set forth in a clear and lively manner, the meaning of the Scriptures, we should never lack fruitful subject, and never, I am persuaded, be without attentive hearers; and what is more, our instruction would not be forgotten: it would live in men, and build them up. We do not want sermons that shall be laboured, and fruitless attempts to reconcile science and Scripture, when the preacher himself knows nothing of science; we do not want apologies for Scripture: we want to let Scripture speak for itself; we want to make men feel that it is not dead, but living—not the record of past generations, but that it is ever fresh and young with immortal truth.

Let me venture, then, to say a few words on the method in which it appears to me our study of Scripture should be conducted in order that it may be brought to bear upon the instruction we deliver from our pulpits.

I. In the first place, we must discard altogether the notion that our business is merely to take a text, or even merely to look at the context. Our great duty as students of Scripture is to remember that Scripture is a whole. It has a living organic unity, and a varied growth and development, the recognition of which is essential if we would wield any portion of it as an instrument of power. It is full indeed of



variety, rich in diversity ; and yet there is unity in the variety, exactly as we see it in the natural world : the unity more delightful, because so many forms conspire to produce it ; the variety more charming, because every graceful curve, every shade of changeful colour, every seeming irregularity, brings us back to the central unity. Just as the branches of the tree are many, and the leaves of the tree multitudinous, and no two leaves alike, and yet it is one tree,—one by virtue of a law of organic growth that gives it its unity ; just as there are many members, many senses, many organs in the human body, yet it is one body ; just as the mountain has its glaciers and its pine forests, its snows and its flowers, its deep ravines, its craggy peaks, its grassy slopes, its dashing torrents, and yet is one mountain ; just as all the families of men differ in form and fashion, in speech and gait, and yet human nature is one : so is it with the Bible. Its books were written in different ages, compiled, perhaps, from ancient records written by different men under circumstances the most widely different, presenting to us every phase of human life and thought—the life of the city and the desert, the life of the shepherd and the trader, the life of the camp and the court ; differing moreover in purpose and style—some historic, some didactic, some poetical, some prophetic, some epistolary : nevertheless they are one ; one as the record, in a sense in which

no other books are the record, of God's revelation of Himself to man, in and by the Church, in and by that Divine kingdom which He has set up upon earth; one, because one great central figure gives meaning and unity to all; one, because the same Holy Spirit of God guided the minds and filled the hearts of those who wrote. No one has illustrated this truth more pertinently or more beautifully than the greatest of the teachers of the early Church—I mean Origen—when he compares the Scriptures to some vast instrument of infinite compass, or rather to some great orchestra where many performers on many instruments conspire to one vast harmony of sound.\*

This unity, indeed, rests on the fact of the Incarnation. If the Incarnation be a fact, then not merely the records of the incarnate life, and the interpretations and comments on that life, but the historical preparation for that life, cannot be separated from the fact itself. Here, therefore, at once we see a principle of order, of cohesion, of unity. Christ is the centre round which all is grouped. The law, the history, the prophecy, all meet and have their fulfilment in Him.

But if we have ever deeply felt and acknowledged this truth, it is impossible that we should rest satisfied with that mere text-handling which is so common

\* Comment on Matt. v. 9. Opp. (De la Rue), tom. iii., p. 441.

in our pulpits. "The Bible," says a recent writer, "ought surely to be 'expounded in order' to the disciples. If it be, as we suppose, a record of a progressive and continuous revelation, it will carry with it traces of the action of the same intelligence which reveals itself in nature. What do we find there? Nature is a living and complex whole, absolutely unintelligible in fragments, and requiring, alike for its scientific explanation and highest practical use, connected study of its unity. No man in his senses would now think of teaching any science after the fashion in which many of us teach the Divine Revelation, by means exclusively of orations on isolated facts and phenomena. Careful, complete and continuous induction of facts is considered the least that any science teacher can supply to his pupils, who are thus enabled to build up true knowledge of laws and forces on the basis of accurate and complete information. It is the eye that looks, but it is the mind that sees—that inner eye which thus discerns the general truth amidst particulars, the evolution of the far-reaching plan, the correlation of forces, and the meaning of isolated phenomena. Can we believe that this same all-embracing, all-continuously-thinking mind of God has wrought differently in man's redemption from sin and death, or can be satisfied with seeing His scholars picking up scattered grains and elements of thought like

so many chickens, taking their gospel throughout a lifetime from a preacher's version of selected verses in the mighty record, without bringing their minds into direct and steady contact with the amply supplied materials for a personal and inductive understanding of the coherent truth? If nature had still been treated thus by mankind, science and art would have remained at their old low-water mark. If the tide of science now overflows, like Jordan in harvest, it is because man's mind has done homage to the continuity of God's, by rising from local particulars into the realm of general ideas." \*

I would therefore urge, in the first place, a systematic, continuous study of the whole Bible. And it will add of course very materially to the value of such study, if we strive, as far as possible, to follow the chronological order of the books. We cannot always pretend here to be on sure ground. Still, with a few exceptions, about which there is, and probably always will be, considerable difference of opinion, the date of a book may be reasonably and approximately fixed. In the New Testament we all feel how immense is the gain when we read St. Paul's Epistles in their chronological sequence, and with a reference to the circumstances of the writer and the

\* Rev. Edward White "On Connected Explanation of Holy Scripture": a paper read at a Preachers' Conference held in London.



circumstances of the church he is addressing. In the Old Testament, though we have far less means of ascertaining the date of the Psalms, for instance, yet whenever we can connect them with any portion of David's life, or with the fortunes of the Israelites at any crisis of the national history, they strike us with fresh force and beauty. So, again, it is with the prophecies. In proportion as we can connect them with the history of the times in which they were uttered, with the life of the prophet himself, and the life of his people, or, as our modern knowledge enables us to do, with the fortunes and vicissitudes of other nations, we catch a meaning in words, an appropriateness in images, which might help us not only to enrich and adorn our sermons, but to make them more vigorous, more pointed, more real in their tone.

This, I think, is the first thing that we should bear in mind in our study of Holy Writ—its living, organic unity. This will not prevent our recognizing—it will rather aid us in recognizing—the growth and development of revelation. We shall discern a correlation between the growth of the Divine kingdom upon earth and the disclosure of Divine truth. We shall not expect to find the good news of God in Genesis as we find it in the Gospel of St. John, or the resurrection in the book of Job as we find it in St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians. Nay, more: we shall



confess, as we read many of the Psalms, or Job, or Ecclesiastes, that men were trained to the reception of higher truths through severe discipline, struggle, aspiration, failure ; and that the revelation was not only gradual and partial, given “in many portions and in divers manners,” but that it was made not only *to* man, but *through* man, won by conflict, and vouchsafed to prayer.

II. But again, as all Scripture has thus its unity, so each separate book has, for the most part, a unity subordinate to the whole,—a unity of some special object and teaching. Of course there are exceptions to this rule. Each Psalm stands alone, and must be interpreted by itself. The Proverbs are, for the most part, a string of gnomic sentences having no cohesion ; though, both at the beginning and the end of the book, there are passages of sustained and continuous reflection. In the historical books the unity is merely one of subject, not of purpose or form ; and there we may either study a life or a character as a whole, or trace the political decay, or the energetic reform, or the spiritual revival, in any period to which we choose to confine our attention.

But how much may be learnt, for instance, from the articulate structure of a book like Genesis, where the history steadily develops into a history of the line of promise, all other families breaking off from it into their several lines, and being dropped on the

way! How much, again, from the book of Exodus, when we have learnt to see how in its very outline it prefigures the history of redemption, the harshness and cruelty of the bondage, the longing for escape, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm, and the mediator by whom deliverance is wrought, and the passage of the sea; then the consecration of the whole nation to be priests before a priesthood is instituted, before the law is given; then the law; lastly, the ordinances of service! Who can reflect upon the mere bare outline of the book which I have thus sketched without seeing how immensely a consecutive study of it must aid us in a thorough and satisfactory dealing with details or particular points?

Or take again that magnificent poem, the poem of Job. Difficulties will always meet us in the study of it, doubts must always rest upon the interpretation of particular passages, though the light which has been shed upon it by modern critical skill and research is very considerable. But we shall hardly fall into any serious error of interpretation when we have once grasped the purpose of the book. It is the grandest lesson ever given to the world on the nature and design of suffering. It is the most wonderful record of a personal experience, struggling with and vanquishing a traditional belief; whilst the prologue of the book teaches us that there may be a higher purpose in suffering than any of which the sufferer

is himself conscious ; that it may be not only for the purification of the sufferer, which was what Job learnt, but for the glory of God. Time forbids my dwelling upon this at large ; but I may refer to such introductions to the book of Job as those of Mr. Froude, M. Godet, and especially that of Mr. Cox, in certain numbers of the *Expositor*, as containing a masterly analysis of the poem.

I could add many more examples of this kind, but I must refer you to the introductions to the various books of Scripture by our great modern exegetes for illustrations upon this point. Here none I suppose will deny the enormous superiority of our modern commentaries to the ancient. It would not be too much to say that there are some books of Holy Scripture, the true key to the interpretation of which God has been pleased to give first to our own age. We may well tremble if we are faithless to such a trust.

Now, I believe there can be no greater benefit to a Christian congregation than a series of exegetical discourses on some book of Scripture. This will be an agreeable variation from the preaching from the single text. If the preacher, having first thoroughly studied the book as a whole, goes through it, not verse by verse, but paragraph by paragraph, showing how the thoughts are linked together, bringing out and expressing and illustrating the prominent truths,

he cannot fail to instruct and edify. He will in the course of his expositions have taught many doctrines, inculcated many valuable lessons, not in a formal or technical manner, but in that natural living way in which they flowed fresh from the author's heart, as the things which God had given him to know and to teach.

And further—and this I feel to be of the deepest importance—he will train his congregation to be students of the Bible for themselves. I think I never read the Gospel of St. John with so much fresh interest and delight as when I read it after listening to those admirable expository lectures on it which the late Dean Alford delivered on Sunday afternoons when he was minister of Quebec Chapel.

But even if we do not go consecutively through a book, there is this obvious advantage in the method that I am advocating, that it gives us a power and a facility in dealing with individual texts and passages which no other method of study can give. We no longer look at them as mottoes for a discourse. We see the thoughts to which they are linked; we discern something of their *relative* importance. Our sermons will gain immensely in clearness and force and authority. At least, we shall never be tempted to neglect the context. We shall try to ascertain, and therefore to teach, not what a verse *may* mean, or *be made* to mean when isolated from all that sur-



rounds it, but what it meant first to the writer, and then how it may be applied to our own needs, in the age and the society in which we live. Thus we shall be kept from that exaggerated and even perverted handling of texts to which I suppose we have all had at times to listen with a sense of weariness and pain. If, indeed, there is one golden rule for a preacher, it is this: *Always look at your context.* We have all heard the story of the young man beginning his theological studies at Oxford, who asked the venerable president of Magdalen, then in his ninetieth year, "Is there any special piece of advice you can give me—any one rule more than another by which I am to guide myself in my studies?" The well-known answer was, "Always verify your references." I am sure that for all preachers, for all theologians, a yet more important rule is, ALWAYS LOOK AT YOUR CONTEXT.

If this were done, would it be possible to hear a sermon on the Atonement preached from such a passage as Isaiah lxiii. 1, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" The answer to the prophet's question in the same verse, it is true, is only this: "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." But when he asks, in the next verse, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him



that treadeth in the wine-fat?" the answer is not, "I give my back to the smiters, I am stained with my own blood," but, "I have trodden down the people in mine anger, and trampled them in my fury, and their blood is sprinkled upon my garments, and I have stained all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." The redemption is the redemption of Israel, to be wrought not by suffering, but by carnage: the victor wades knee-deep in the blood of his foes. Nor should we hear an argument for the necessity of an Incarnation based upon Psalm xlix. 7, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother; nor give to God a ransom for him," when it is so undeniably certain—so evident from the most hasty glance at the context—that the psalmist is insisting on the truth that no wealth can save the possessor or others from death. Nor in the 110th Psalm would the words (ver. 7), "He shall drink of the brook in the way, therefore shall he lift up the head," be expounded of the sufferings of the Messiah, when the close of the preceding verse describes him as "wounding the heads (or head) over many countries." Nor would the saying (Eccl. xi. 3), "Where the tree falleth, there it shall be," be quoted in proof of the impossibility of repentance in another life; or the prediction in Malachi i. 11, "My name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place shall incense

be offered unto my name, and a pure offering," be interpreted of the Eucharist. Nor, again, should we find preachers taking the words of Job's friends, or the sometimes half-sceptical utterances of Ecclesiastes, as if they were Divine truths to be illustrated and enforced from the pulpit. Again, the passage in Phil. ii. 12, 13, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure," is often taken as a text for a sermon on man's co-operation with God in the work of salvation, whereas we have only to read the whole of the twelfth verse to see that the point of the apostle's exhortation is something very different. So, again, I have heard Heb. iv. 12, "For the word of God is quick and powerful," etc., applied to the Scriptures, whereas the context shows (see ver. 2 of the chapter) that the writer is speaking of the word preached. And it almost makes one despair of any fair interpretation of Scripture when one sees a passage like Heb. xiii. 10, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle," expounded of the Lord's table, and of the Christian sacrifice of the Eucharist. It is not too much to say of such an explanation that it has no kind of support in the context, and is opposed to the whole scope of the epistle. The word "altar," most unfortunately, as I venture to think, applied in the third century (I

believe there is no earlier instance) to the Lord's table, was quite enough to suggest the interpretation, with utter disregard of the writer's meaning here, and of his general argument.

III. There is another point closely connected with this study of books as a whole, on which I am anxious to say a few words.

When we adopt what I may venture to call the textual method of treating Scriptures—when, that is, we set to work to hunt for texts all through the Bible in support of some doctrine on which we are going to preach—we are not only very apt to make a wrong application of them, but we lose a great deal of interesting and valuable instruction. We lose all that comes to us from observing how different minds, under the inspiration and guidance of the same Spirit, looked at, felt, taught the same truths. Thus, for instance, St. John only reveals to us Christ as “the Word of God.” St. John only gives the name Paraclete to the Son and the Spirit. St. Paul's doctrine of the righteousness which is by faith is in its form and development peculiar to himself. St. James speaks of faith, St. John of righteousness, in terms very unlike those of St. Paul. The Epistle to the Hebrews gives us a view of the Person and the work of Christ in relation to the types of the Old Testament, to which we have nothing parallel in the Gospels or Epistles. I do not say that these

views of truth are contradictory or even divergent. I do say that they supplement one another. And I do say that the more we recognise the diversity in the unity in the apostolic writings, the better prepared we shall be to give it a charitable and hearty recognition in all teachers of the Church from the times of the Apostles to our own.

IV. Need I add that the Scriptures must be studied in the original tongues, if we are to make the use of them which we ought to make in our preparation for the pulpit? And here permit me to express my regret that the study of Hebrew is so much neglected in England. I wish it were made a part of the curriculum in our public schools. I believe the study would be most valuable, even apart from its bearing on theology. The man who only knows the western tongues can hardly be said to know language. One mode of it, one form of it as a vehicle of expression so peculiar as that of the Semitic dialects, has been wholly and undeservedly neglected. To every scholar there must be a distinct gain in some familiarity with the Semitic syntax and vocabulary. But for the student of the Old Testament Scriptures such knowledge is indispensable. Every one is aware, even if he be conscious that he is not a master of Greek, with how much more freedom and satisfaction his knowledge of the original enables him to handle a commentary on the New Testament. He feels that



he can, to some extent, use his own judgment. But in the Old Testament, on the contrary, he is at the mercy of the commentator; and if he attempt to compare commentators, he will either be driven to despair, or he will eagerly catch at the interpretation which jumps with his fancy or his prejudices, or which seems to give him the best handle for a sermon.

It is really sad to think of the havoc wrought in the pulpit with texts through a want of this knowledge. Some part of the mischief may be remedied, let us hope, by the revision of the English Version. But I cannot pretend to claim infallibility for the revisers, and I do not suppose that even their labours will render this kind of study very much less necessary than before. There are subtle shades of meaning, links of connection, trains of thought, which no translator can wholly give. The best translation must always leave room enough for the commentator. That I venture to believe no member of the Revision Companies would dispute. Therefore even the new and Revised Version will not supersede the study of the Bible in the original tongues, though, as Bishop Thirlwall remarked in a speech in Convocation, it may rob clergymen and dissenting ministers of some of their favourite texts. Meanwhile, we may at least be on our guard against flagrant mistranslations, and against the use of passages which are certainly no



part of the original text. No one ought now to appeal to the famous passage in Haggai as proving that the Messiah is "the desire of all nations," as the rendering is due entirely to the Vulgate, and the most orthodox of Hebraists have long since abandoned it; or to the English version of Heb. ii. 16, "He taketh not on Him the nature of angels, but He taketh on Him the seed of Abraham," in support of the doctrine of the Incarnation; the true rendering being, "He succoureth not angels, but He succoureth the seed," etc. No one ought to forget how much may be said on the authority, not of modern critics, but of the ancient versions, against the reading in Psalm ii., "Kiss ye the Son;" or how entirely in the well-known passage, Job xix., the rendering of our translators, "Though worms destroy this body," gives a colouring to the sense which is wholly wanting in the original. On the other hand, how great would be the gain—far more than compensating, surely, for such a loss—if the true rendering of Isaiah ix. i. were given to the Church, and if that prophecy, now so hopelessly unintelligible to our congregations who hear it read on Christmas Day, were made to appear in its wonderful beauty and grandeur! "They shall pass through the land," it is said, in gloom and perplexity. "But," cries the prophet, "the darkness is driven away. For there shall be no more gloom where there was vexation; as in the former time He

made light of the land of Zebulun and then Naphtali, so in the latter time He hath made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, the circuit of the nations. The people that sat in darkness have seen a great light," etc. Even the italics of the ancient version are not always a safeguard. A very celebrated preacher, in a sermon on Psalm xxvii., "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face," made one of the points of his sermon turn on the words "When thou saidst," commenting on them as marking the readiness and earnestness of the speaker—"then immediately without any delay" (such was his paraphrase), though those words are not in the Hebrew, and are written in italics in the English Version.

I know that the study on which I have been insisting is one that requires very serious labour. Of all books in the world, the Bible is one which will not yield up its riches and its sweetness except to the diligent and faithful and earnest student. All great works demand long and patient and persevering study. The lesser mind cannot expect to grasp at once the purpose of the greater. Sir J. Reynolds tells us of the profound disappointment with which he first beheld Raphael's great picture of the Transfiguration at the Vatican. It was only as he came again and again, only as he lingered over it and dwelt upon it till the picture took possession of him, that he at last perceived its grandeur and its har-

mony. It is the same with music or with sculpture, or with the finest masterpieces of literature. Much more must it be true of the thoughts of God, that they are not to be grasped lightly by us. The great discoverers in God's revelation of Himself in nature have been men of humble mind, and of self-denying, unwearied labour. The knowledge they have gathered, and by which they have enriched the world, has been the fruit of patient research. It must be the same in the study of God's other great revelation of Himself in the written Word. What mines of wealth are hidden there! How inexhaustible is the fulness thereof! A man may give a long lifetime to the study, and yet feel how far he is from having mastered the volume. There will always be some new light, some fresh and surprising discovery. It is said that on one occasion when a number of wits among the French Encyclopedists were conversing, the question having been proposed, what book each would choose to take with him into prison or exile, if his choice were restricted to one, all exclaimed, "The Bible." I do not know on what authority the story rests, though I have seen it recently quoted by a French writer. But

"Se non è vero, è ben trovato."

For certainly no one volume contains so much food for thought on the highest subjects, none embraces

such a varied literature, or more splendid specimens of literary skill, none has so sounded the deeps of the human heart, or brought God so near to man.

Moreover, as I believe that the Spirit of God ever dwells in His Church to enlighten and sanctify it, and to guide it into all the truth, I believe that the Church is not only the witness to, and the guardian of, the written Word, but that she is the interpreter of the written Word. I believe, therefore, that she is abdicating her high and indisputable office, and casting away her gifts, and denying her vocation, when she thinks herself bound to adopt nothing but past interpretations of the Bible. This is to impoverish and drain her spiritual life. What means the experience of past ages, what the gathered wisdom of those who have gone before, if having all this we are to fold it in a napkin and lie down to sleep, instead of trading with it to profitable purpose?

I most entirely and thankfully agree with what the Archbishop of Canterbury said in the second of his seven weighty Addresses which he delivered to the clergy at his second visitation—that what we want is not so much a new school of theology, as one that will found all its teaching on the Holy Scriptures. “I think,” he says, “there will be this difference between such a school and those which preceded it, that it will be more jealous than that



which went before it of any human additions to the Word of God ; that it will be very careful not to exalt any human authority, even the most venerable (however important it may be to pay due attention to such authority in its proper place), to an equal rank with the revelation of God." And he goes on to say that he believes "that we have, powerful for good, working for good, amongst our rising clergy, this very system that some say we want as a novelty." \* God grant that this belief may prove to be well founded !

More and more am I convinced that the great work of the Reformation is yet in germ. It was the commanding merit of the Reformers that they not only gave the people the Scriptures in their own tongue wherein they were born, but that they also taught them to read the Scriptures in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. A new era of Biblical interpretation begins with them. We feel as we listen especially to men like Luther and Calvin that they are men who are not merely busy with texts for controversy, though no doubt they did not escape the tendency of their age and of the ages that preceded them, but that they did enter into and sympathise with the life and the history of the Scriptures till the characters of the Bible became living

\* "Some Thoughts on the Duties of the Established Church of England," pp. 24, 25.

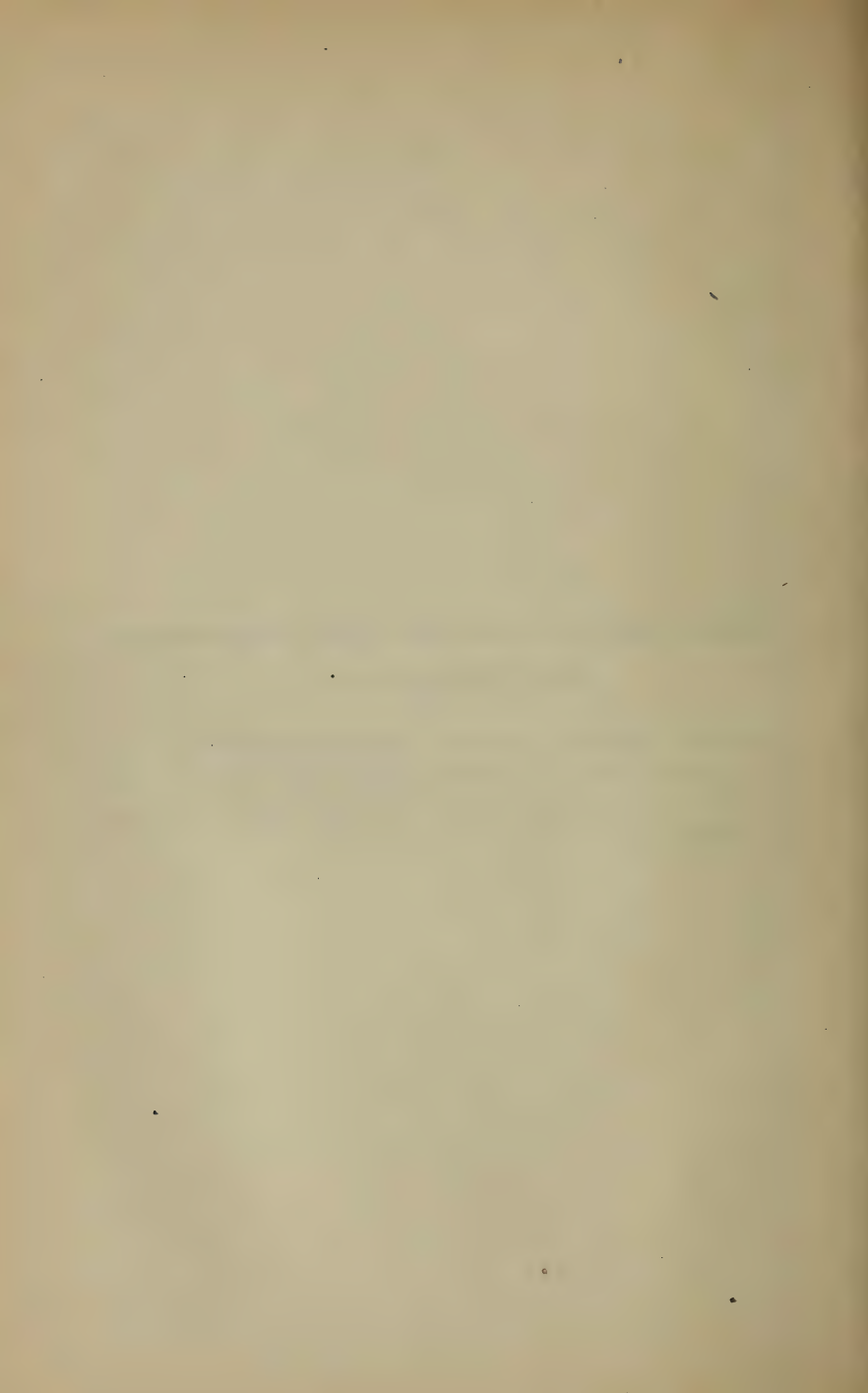


and present, and the words of the Bible became living words, "words with hands and feet," to use Luther's expression, which changed and regenerated a world. The same mighty instrument is put into our hands. May we learn to use it aright. May He who of old time taught His servants by the sending to them the light of his Holy Spirit grant us by the same Spirit to read aright and to divide aright His word of truth. May He draw us away from wretched strifes about the ceremonials of divine service to the study of His Word. There we shall find the true Eirenicon. Many questions which now look large will sink into their proper insignificance. A healthier tone will be seen in our theology, a larger charity in our teaching, a surer and a more enlightened faith in ourselves and in those who hear us.



Texts : their Interpretation, Misinterpretation,  
and Misapplication.

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## X.

### *TEXTS: THEIR INTERPRETATION, MISINTERPRETATION, AND MISAPPLICATION.*

I HAVE to treat, if I rightly understand the title of my paper, of a particular branch of a wide and general subject. I am not called to discuss the broad question of the interpretation of Holy Scripture, nor even that of the interpretation of Scripture texts under its more general aspects. The line laid down for me is more precise and definite. I am asked to consider the interpretation of Scripture texts in the light of the most common errors of misinterpretation and misapplication; and to point out how such errors may best be avoided.

Speaking as a worker in this field of labour to my fellow-workers, I am to endeavour to offer for their consideration some hints and suggestions, some helps and safeguards which shall conduce to the more accurate and profitable interpretation of texts of Holy Scripture.

Regarding this, then, as my subject, there are three canons of interpretation which without further preface I will venture to lay down.



I. The first is, *In interpreting a text, seek to ascertain the exact and proper meaning of the words in which it is couched.*

A rule like this might seem to be superfluous, and yet experience proves that it is not so. An interpretation is sometimes put upon a text by a preacher, which the English words, apart from any reference to the original, on careful consideration will not bear. A thoughtful and intelligent hearer—and some such there are in almost every congregation, and it should be our aim as preachers to minister to their thoughtfulness and intelligence, and to add to their number—will find himself asking, “Can this really be the meaning of the text? I know nothing of Greek or Hebrew, but as it stands in my English Bible I do not see how this can be got out of it.” Our very familiarity with the Bible may prove a snare to us in this respect. Its words and phrases which we have known from childhood are stereotyped in our memories, and sometimes in the inexact form which popular tradition has given them. There are such things as conventional readings, as well as conventional interpretations of texts: readings which are inaccurate representations of our English version, but which have become so familiar to him by frequent repetition, that the preacher is in danger of unconsciously regarding them as the *ipsissima verba* of his text. How frequently, for example, do we hear

what I venture to think a wrong turn given to the exhortation of St. Paul to the Colossians, "Set your affection on things above"! \* How often is that text quoted, "Set your affections on things above"! Even in a work of so accomplished a scholar as the present Lord Selborne, "The Book of Praise," doubtless *per incuriam*, possibly by a printer's error, the mistake occurs.† The difference is only that of a single letter, affections for affection, the plural for the singular; but it alters perceptibly, and I think injuriously, the meaning of the phrase. It is not of the affections or passions, but of the mind and thought and disposition of a Christian, that the Apostle is here really speaking. Twice, and twice only, I believe, the word affections occurs in the plural in the English New Testament, and both times in the writings of St. Paul. To the Romans he says, speaking of the heathen world, "God gave them up to vile affections," and there the Greek word is *πάθη*.‡ To the Galatians he writes, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts," and there it is *παθήματα*.§ But in the passage before us it is quite another word that is used. What St. Paul here says is *τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε*, "Set your affection," or as it is

\* Colossians iii. 2.

† In the list of contents. "Part IV. 'Songs of the Heart.' V. 'Hope.' 'Set your affections,' etc.

‡ *εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας*. Rom. i. 26.

§ Gal. v. 24.

in the margin, your "mind," on things above. Affect them, let your disposition be towards them. The state of mind recommended is the exact opposite, as a glance at the Greek makes evident, of that condemned by the same writer when he speaks to the Philippians of those who "mind earthly things."\* It is not here the translation that is in fault, but the interpretation which is inaccurately put upon it. "Set your affection" represents sufficiently St. Paul's words. It means, as I have said, affect heavenly things—be heavenly-minded; or as Bishop Lightfoot paraphrases the exhortation, "You must not only *seek* heaven; you must also *think* heaven." Similarly in the Litany we pray for grace to receive God's word with "pure affection"—*i.e.*, with a mind free from prejudice, purely affected, rightly disposed towards it.

How often, again, are the words of the Psalmist, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory," employed as an ascription of praise, not only in the *Non nobis, Domine*, of the musician, but in the more sober discourse of the preacher! Not uncommonly, too, a word is changed in the quotation, the memory aiding and abetting by its inaccuracy the misconception of the mind: "Not unto us, O Lord," so it runs, "*be* (instead of 'give') the praise." Whereas, in the Psalmist's use of them, the words are an earnest prayer for help, and that prayer urged not

\* οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες. Phil. iii. 19.

on the plea of our merit, but of God's mere mercy and of the honour of His name.

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?" (Ps. cxv. 1, 2).

Or, to take but one other example, how may a preacher sometimes be misled by the familiar sound of a word or phrase, to which a particular meaning commonly attaches in the New Testament, but which in the text in question is used in another and perhaps its own more strict and proper meaning! For instance, in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the second verse, we read, in the course of a comparison between the Jews of old and ourselves as Christians, "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them." Now, it is easily conceivable that a preacher, caught by the familiar ring of the phrase "the gospel preached," might set himself to discourse from this text upon the Messianic character of the Old Testament, the Gospel in type and prophecy and promise under the Law. And yet the very form of the expression, "unto us as well as unto them," which if that had been the meaning would surely have been inverted, "unto them as well as unto us," might suggest another and a truer interpretation. And a reference to the context and to the whole argument (commencing with iii. 7) in



which the words occur, makes it quite clear that the phrase "the gospel was preached" is here used, not in its technical sense of the good tidings of great joy, the message of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord, but in its earlier and more proper sense of a proclamation of good news or joyful tidings; and that the subject-matter of that proclamation is not the gospel as we generally understand it, but *the rest*—to them of Canaan, to us of heaven—of which the writer is here treating. Thus understood, the order of the words, "unto us as well as unto them," is accurate and intelligible. That good tidings of a rest, the rest of Canaan, had been preached to the Jews of old time, is the admitted basis of the whole argument; that the gospel in that sense had been preached to them was beyond a doubt. But the writer's object is to show that Christian Jews, and Christians generally, are now in a similar position; that unto us, as well as unto them, good tidings of a rest have been proclaimed. The rest of the Sabbath was from the creation, the rest of Canaan from the times of Joshua; but of neither of these, for they were things in the long past, did the Holy Ghost by David speak in the ninety-fifth Psalm: "*There remaineth* therefore a rest to the people of God." Unto us as unto them have the good tidings of a rest been made known. Let us therefore labour, let us therefore strive to enter into that rest.



The importance of consulting the original as a means of ensuring verbal accuracy of interpretation is now so generally recognized, and has been so often urged, that I need hardly insist upon it. One brief illustration of it, as bearing on our present point of verbal accuracy of interpretation, it may suffice to give. One of the most familiar, and certainly not the least important, of the rules by which the ministers of Christ are wont to guide themselves in their teaching, is that saying of St. Paul's, "I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." But let us read these words in the Greek in which St. Paul wrote them—*οὐ γὰρ ἔκρινα εἰδέναι τι ἐν ὑμῖν εἰ μὴ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ τοῦτον ἐσταυρωμένον*: "I did not resolve," that is, "to know anything else; that was the only thing that I made it my business to know,"—and do we not perceive at once how, without losing definiteness, the Apostle's decision gains breadth; how room is left for other things to come in incidentally, and to take their place in subservience to the one great aim of the preacher? If I further refer for a moment, under this head, to the well-known verse, "The Lord gave the word, great was the company of the preachers,"\* it is not so much because I suppose that we are likely now-a-days to speak of the "preachers"—women, as the feminine in the Hebrew shows them

\* Ps. lxxviii. 11—Prayer Book version.

to be—as the heralds of salvation, as because I should like to draw attention in passing to the version of Tate and Brady, happy alike in critical accuracy and poetical diction :

“Thou gav’st the word, we sallied forth,  
And in that powerful word o’ercame ;  
While virgin troops, with songs of mirth,  
In state our conquest did proclaim.”

And this careful attention to the exact meaning of the words which my first canon requires will ensure the right application of a text, no less certainly than its right interpretation. I confess, for instance, that the use which is sometimes made of St. Paul’s well-known words to the Corinthians in support of the weekly offertory, has never commended itself to my judgment as a legitimate application of them. Whether the weekly offertory be desirable or no, I do not see how the practice of it can reasonably be founded on the passage in question. The advice of the Apostle to the Christians of Corinth was, that, with reference to a collection which they were to make for the poor saints at Jerusalem, each of them should, on the first day of every week during the interval between their receipt of his letter and his promised visit to them, lay by him in store such a sum of money as his success in trade or material prosperity from other causes enabled him to part with. The aggregate of the sums so stored up would

thus be ready at hand for each individual to offer to St. Paul when he arrived among them, and so there would be no gatherings when he came. "His time," as Dean Alford explains it, "would then be better employed in imparting to them a spiritual benefit, than in urging them to and superintending this duty." But what has this to do with the weekly offertory, either in principle or in practice? Laying up in store by myself is not putting into a bag or basin at church; I cannot tell week by week—very few of us can—how God has prospered me in my business or profession. It is not the avowed object of the weekly offertory to set the minister free from serving tables. The text will not bear the application made of it. Where the practice of weekly offertory is thought desirable, by all means let it be maintained; but let it rest on a better foundation than this.

Equally difficult do I find it to understand how the words of St. James, so often quoted in defence of free and open churches, can be properly applied to that subject. Even if they refer to assemblies for worship at all—and it is not easy to say what "sitting under the footstool" means if they do—at most they can only be held to condemn misappropriation, and are quite silent as to the evil of any appropriation whatever.

II. A second canon of interpretation, which indeed I have already in some measure forestalled in my

discussion of the first, is this: *Study the relation of the text which you are interpreting to the context in which it occurs.*

Under this head there is a general, but not irrelevant remark, which I desire at the outset to make. The multiplication of commentaries and works designed to explain and illustrate Holy Scripture is amongst the hopeful signs of religious life and activity in our day. But it is not an unmixed good. The temptation under which the preacher lies to take his view of a text at second hand is by virtue of it greatly increased. The commentary practical and exegetical, the sermon able and interesting of some leading divine, is so easy of access, so ready to hand: it requires an effort of will to take up his Bible *first*; to *begin* by studying the text on which he proposes to preach, and the context in which it stands; to think for himself before he consults the thoughts of others; to kneel alone and listen to God's voice as he cries, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." And yet on this independent study of the Word of God, not by any means as excluding, but as preceding and preparing for the study of commentaries upon it, how much of freshness, how much of power, how much of reality, how much of *ownership* in our sermons depends! And this brings me to my second canon of interpretation. An intelligent



acquaintance with the context, a firm grasp of the argument as a whole, is a weapon which no expositor of Scripture texts can afford to dispense with. Take, for example, the familiar text, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Standing alone, what a gospel does it contain! How many a wounded conscience has it healed! How many a burdened spirit has it relieved! God forbid that we should deny its efficacy or dim its lustre as an independent truth. And yet, ought a preacher ever to forget that these words do not stand alone—that there is a condition attached to the comforting appropriation of this great truth—that the complete sentence runs, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin"? By remembering this, will he not be preserved from the danger—not, I fear, altogether an imaginary one—of obscuring the severer side of the gospel message; of keeping back one half of that whole counsel of God which includes repentance towards God, as well as faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; of omitting to declare the conditions on which the gracious assurances of the gospel may be appropriated? And will he not really secure to his text much of its power to comfort a troubled conscience? "If we walk in the light,"



so the condition runs; but the following context clearly shows that the first discovery which that light will make to us is of our own sinfulness; that the first error from which it will emancipate us is the false dream of night and darkness that we have no sin; the first deed of day to which it will awaken us is to confess our sins. He, then, who knows his sins, and is troubled for them, has already emerged out of darkness; he has already taken the first step in walking in the light. To him, therefore, the truth belongs in its first application—"the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Let him continue to walk in the light, and the cleansing process shall be continually renewed.\* And this rule of contextual accuracy, if it be observed, will sometimes yield us, if I mistake not, a new and valuable application of a text, without necessarily robbing us of its older and more familiar application. Take, for example, those comfortable words of our Saviour Christ, with which our Church, in her Communion office, seals by the Master's own voice the sentence of absolution, which has just been pronounced with His authority by the servant: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Who of us could ever dissociate, who would ever wish to do so if

\* 1 John i. 7—10. The verb is in the present tense, denoting the continued action, corresponding to the daily need : *καθαρίζει*.

he could, those words from the burden of sin and the rest which Christ alone can give from it? Yet a study of the whole chapter, which forms one connected argument throughout, shows clearly that that is not their first and most proper reference. It is of doubt and unbelief, suggested by the wavering faith of John the Baptist, and by his question, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" that our Lord is here directly speaking. It is to that burden, the burden of him who would believe, but feels that he cannot, the burden of failing faith, of unwilling doubt, that our Lord here directly refers. "No one," He has just said, "knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal Him." Would you then know the Father? and do you feel that to that high knowledge you are unequal to attain? Then come to Me, and I will reveal Him to you. For that burden of your inability to believe take another in exchange, "My yoke"—the yoke of meekness and humility (for I am meek and lowly in heart), the yoke of teachableness and submission. And so in humble faith, in the blessed refuge of that quiet acquiescence, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight," you shall find rest unto your soul. Who does not thank God in these days of doubt, for his own sake, and for the sake of others, for such an application of the text as this? And yet

it is to a study of the context that we are indebted for it. And in gaining it we part with nothing; for the wide terms of the invitation and the wide consequences of sin alike justify us in applying our Saviour's words to sin itself, and to every form of evil to which the teeming womb of sin has given birth.

The example with which I have just dealt may serve to remind us that, though we should always seek to ascertain the meaning of a text by a reference to the context, it by no means follows that we are to limit its use and application by such reference. The inspired writer may be employing a general principle in dealing with a particular case. It is obviously lawful for us to apply the general principle to other cases on which it legitimately bears. This is what we commonly do with the sayings of all great men. A great mind recognises the general law in the special example, and is led by it to enunciate truths or principles of the widest application, which become the treasured aphorisms of every age and country. So it is with the writers of the Bible. Indeed, we are warranted in making a freer use of Holy Scripture in this respect than of mere human writings, and that for a reason which Lord Bacon has well given in the following passage, quoted by Dean Goulburn in his republished work on "The Inspiration and Study of the Holy Scriptures."\*

\* P. 108, edition of 1878.

“It is an excellent observation which hath been made upon the answers of our Saviour Christ to many of the questions which were propounded to Him, how that they are impertinent to the state of the question demanded : the reason whereof is, because not being like man, which knows man’s thoughts by his words, but knowing man’s thoughts immediately, He never answered their words, but their thoughts ; much in the like manner it is with the Scriptures, which being written to the thoughts of men, and to the succession of all ages, with a foresight of all heresies, contradictions, differing estates of the Church, yea, and particularly of the elect, are not to be interpreted only (he does not say ‘not at all,’ or ‘not first and chiefly,’) according to the latitude of the proper sense of the place, and respectively towards that present occasion whereupon the words were uttered ; or in precise congruity or contexture with the words before or after ; or in contemplation of the principal scope of the place ; but have in themselves, not only totally or collectively, but distributively in clauses and words, infinite springs and streams of doctrine to water the Church in every part.”

III. It is with reference partly to this wider range of interpretation and application, but also to all interpretation and application, that my remaining canon is framed. Whether, having first ascertained the



meaning of the words and the bearing of the context, you proceed to deal with the text as it stands, or whether, grasping the principle which underlies it, you unstring the pearl, and drop the thread on which it hung, in either case I would say, *Consider the relation of any text which you would interpret or apply to revealed truth as a whole.*

That such relation exists is beyond a doubt. It exists for all truth, to whatever relating, and however acquired. It exists for that great harmonious body of divinely revealed truth, which our Lord describes as "the whole truth." It is of this connection between a single truth, however perfect and independent in itself it may seem to be, and the whole body of truth on which it really rests, and apart from which it cannot be maintained, that Luther in his "Table Talk" says: "The school theologians have a fine similitude thereupon, that it is as with a sphere or globe lying upon a table, which touches it only with one point, yet it is the whole table which supports the globe."

It is hardly possible to overrate the importance of this canon in interpreting and applying Scripture texts. How many errors and heresies, how many partial or exaggerated representations of truth have been due, not so much to mistaking the language or neglecting the context of particular texts, as to insisting upon them exclusively, or giving them a



prominence which was out of keeping with the analogy or proportion of the faith! On the other hand, what an interesting volume might be written of instances in which texts of Holy Scripture misunderstood or misapplied, as regards the meaning of the words or the bearing of the context, but in which an eye spiritually enlightened, and a heart warm with heavenly love, saw Christ and the things of Christ, have converted a sinner or comforted a saint, or smoothed a dying pillow! We may smile at such quaint conceits as that of the learned and pious Dean of St. Paul's, Dr. Donne, who on his appointment as vicar of St. Dunstan's, in the year 1624, took for his first text the words, "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without, unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother unto her;"\* and proceeded in the discourse which he founded upon it to represent himself, as a duly ordained minister, to be the lawful brother of the deceased pastor of that now widowed church, and in succeeding to the vicarage to be doing the part of a husband's brother by marrying the widow, in the hope of begetting souls and raising up spiritual children to him. But we cannot fail to recognize beneath this fanciful garb the earnestness, the piety,

\* Deut. xxv. 5.

the appreciation of the true position and office of a minister of Christ, which breathe throughout the sermon. We may feel inclined to be amused at that passage in the colloquy between the two pilgrims, in which, with reference to their friend Talkative, Faithful says to his brother Christian, "This brings to my mind that of Moses, by which he describeth the beast that is clean. He is such an one that parteth the hoof and cheweth the cud ; not that parteth the hoof only, or that cheweth the cud only. The hare cheweth the cud, but yet is unclean, because he parteth not the hoof. And this truly resembleth Talkative : he cheweth the cud, he seeketh knowledge, he cheweth upon the word ; but he divideth not the hoof, he parteth not with the way of sinners ; but as the hare, he retaineth the foot of a dog or bear, and therefore is unclean ;" to which Christian replies, " You have spoken, for aught I know, the true gospel sense of those texts."

But, however we may demur to that being the gospel sense of the texts, or to their having any gospel sense at all, we must readily admit that it is gospel doctrine that is set forth. I am not defending such fanciful interpretations of Scripture as these ; on the contrary, I earnestly deprecate them. In our own day they are specially likely to be injurious. But I do say, Better a thousand times a text inaccurately understood or fancifully applied, but yet

used to teach or enforce the truth of God, than a text explained with all the nice grammatical and critical acumen of some modern rationalist, and then perverted to the support of error, or evacuated of all spiritual life and significance. It is the combination of the two that I desire to urge, and that I believe to be the special need of our day. To that, my three canons are a humble contribution. Let us endeavour, in our interpretation and application of God's Word, to be verbally accurate, contextually accurate, theologically accurate; and then, through His help without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, we shall not interpret and apply in vain.



# Prophecy in its Relation to Preaching.

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## XI.

### *PROPHECY IN ITS RELATION TO PREACHING.*

MY object in this paper is not to enter upon the wide field of prophetic study, or to discuss the different schools of prophetic interpretation, but to offer a few considerations upon the relation which the interpretation of prophecy bears to pulpit ministrations.

If we are to preach according to the proportion of faith, or, in other words, to give to every part of Holy Scripture its due place and share in our teaching, prophecy will undoubtedly claim a greater prominence than is usually given to it. Take, for example, the threefold classification of the Old Testament into the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms; and if we separate what may be called moral teaching from distinct predictions, we shall find that nearly, if not quite, one-third of the Old Testament contains prophetic utterances of future events; and these are not confined to the books of the Prophets properly so called, but extend to the books of Moses and to the Psalms. The same re-

mark will apply almost to the same extent to the New Testament. If, then, it appertains to our office to be expositors of God's Word, we cannot neglect so large a portion of it without loss to ourselves and to our congregations. But there is another reason which should have still greater weight with us, and that is, that prophecy is one of the chief evidences of Christianity, and this not exclusively upon the ground that we can prove that certain prophecies have been fulfilled, but because the whole history of prophecy, both before and after its fulfilment, proves its Divine origin, and it is now, as it has always been, a light shining in a dark place, pointing out the will of God in the future as well as the will of God in the past; for history unfulfilled is prophecy, and prophecy fulfilled is history. In this way Gurtler, the learned German Professor, who lived about two hundred years ago, expresses the same thought in his "*Systema Theologiæ*." "*Scripturarum propheticarum diligens meditatio necessaria est quia—*(1) *Sunt pars verbi Dei* (Col. iii. 16). (2) *Sedulo nobis commendantur a Paulo* (1 Thess. v. 20), *et a Petro* (2 Peter i. 10). (3) *Conciliant providentiam in temporibus periculosis, confirmant fidem, provocant preces, excitant spem, suadent patientiam, afferunt consolationem, gignunt numinis timorem.*" And this use of prophecy becomes all the more impor-

tant when we test the evidence of its inspiration ; such, for instance, as the historical proof that it was uttered before the events which it foretold were accomplished ; secondly, that the events foretold were of such a nature that no human foresight or experience could have conceived the probability or possibility of their accomplishment ; and thirdly, because they have been and will be accomplished by agencies which, so far from consciously seeking to bring about their fulfilment, have been opposed to it, and have thrown every obstacle they could in the way of it. But, fourthly, in His great condescension and care for His people, God would not leave His Church in ignorance of His purposes, but from time to time gave them intimations of what He was about to do. These, and other arguments which might be adduced, show the use of which God intended prophecy to be made, and as we find it was used by our Lord and His disciples in the New Testament.

No less than one hundred prophecies are quoted in the New Testament to confirm the leading doctrines of the Christian religion. Again and again we find our Lord referring to the prophecies, as when He appeared to the disciples at Emmaus. He did not at once reveal Himself to them, but made His appeal to their faith in the prophets : “ O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the

prophets have spoken! . . . and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." In this conversation, if I understand it correctly, our Lord did not lay the stress of His appeal so much upon the fulfilment of prophecy which they ought to have discovered in all that had happened, as upon the revelation which had been made that such things would come to pass. And it is against this use of prophecy as a preparation for the coming events, rather than as against its actual fulfilment, that the attacks of sceptics have been made, and will be made until the end. For "there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." We admit that the interpretation of prophecy, whether in anticipation of the future, or in the exact historical and chronological fulfilment of the past, is a matter of difficulty; and we must not be surprised if differences of opinion should exist, even as great and vital as those which are held by Jews and Christians, relating to the birth, life and death, and second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. But this does not in any way alter the truth or the intent of prophecy, much less does it hinder the duty of humble and prayerful investi-



gation. Differences of interpretation arise for the most part from the habit of separating single texts of Scripture, and expounding them by themselves, without reference to the harmony of the entire prophetic word. Bishop Horsley says: "No prophecy of Scripture is made its own interpreter, or of self-interpretation. The Scripture prophecies are not detailed predictions of separate independent events, but are all united in a regular and entire system, all terminating in one great object—the promulgation of the gospel and the complete establishment of Messiah's kingdom." We must not then imagine that we have reached the scope of a prophecy when we take for our Christmas-Day text Luke i. 31, "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus," and prove to demonstration that it was the fulfilment of Isaiah vii. 14, Micah v. 2, and the like; but we must go on to what follows in verse 32—"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." It is comparatively easy from our Christian point of view to show the accomplishment of all that relates to the Incarnation, but it requires much prayerful study and comparison of Scripture with

Scripture to sketch out the order of events, from a Jewish point of view, in the establishment of Christ's kingdom; and this is not only a reasonable and lawful course to pursue, but it has the authority of precedent. St. Peter tells us that the prophets inquired and searched diligently what manner of time the spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. And so we find Daniel (Dan. ix. 2) understood by books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolation of Jerusalem. And St. Peter directs us to the more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well to take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place *until* the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts. Prophecy, then, is not a course of reading for the curious and the learned, but for the whole Church, to whom the promise of the Holy Ghost is given: "He shall not only bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you, but He will show you things to come." And with this Divine and infallible Teacher we are encouraged to study the symbolic visions of the Apocalypse: "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of the prophecy of this book."

We must not be content with the old and I hope

Now exploded formula that prophecy was not intended to be understood until it was fulfilled. This would narrow the grand revelations of the Divine purpose into one single result. All we should have to say of the prediction would be, Behold, an event has come to pass which God has foretold in the Scriptures; but it has not previously exercised the faith of the Church in the Divine Word, nor had any influence upon the hope of the Church in anticipation of coming events, nor led to the study of Scripture as a sure guide into the future. Until the end, practically, the volume of the book of prophecy has been sealed up, and its sharp, clear outlines have been enveloped in darkness, like the chart of a *terra incognita* or of an unexplored region. But this manifestly was not the purpose for which Enoch prophesied, or Noah warned the ungodly world, or Jonah preached to Nineveh, or Zechariah and Haggai encouraged the builders of the Temple, or the Lord Jesus with tears foretold the desolation of Jerusalem. Prophecy has been and is the finger of God pointing onward to the events of history, mapping out God's gracious purposes, and giving substance and reality and intensity to the dispensations of Providence. As the star led the Magi to Bethlehem, so the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus in all the events connected with His first and second advent. History assumes a new aspect read in the light

prophecy, and whether it be the future of Moab, or Ammon, or Damascus, of Tyre and Sidon, of Nineveh, of Babylon, of Jerusalem, of Persia, Greece, or Rome; and whatever remains to be accomplished in the ten kingdoms of the beast, the Apocalyptic Babylon, the man of sin, or the woes of the Euphrates, the hopes of the Church will be sustained by the words of her Lord—"Behold, I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. *Behold, I have told you before.*" (Matt. xxiv. 25.)

Nor is this all. The teaching of our Lord contained nearly as much of prediction as it did of exposition of the fulfilment of Scripture; and if any one, even the least of His prophecies, had failed, His whole claim to be a Divine Teacher might justly have been questioned. We must bear in mind that if minute details of ancient prophecy were fulfilled by our Lord during His life and ministry at almost every step, even to the "I thirst" upon the cross, so did He as minutely from time to time forewarn His disciples as to what would happen to Him and to them before as well as after His ascension into heaven. When, for example, He foretold the fall of Peter and the crowing of the cock, the betrayal of Judas and the dipping of the sop, the preparation for the passover, the man carrying a pitcher of water, the loosing the colt, the journey to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead, and the like, these were so



marked and definite, that His Divine knowledge was continually brought to the test of actual experience.

Again, when He foretold His persecution, and sufferings, and death, and resurrection, each detail was specified in such a way that a single failure would have thrown discredit upon His testimony. Who can conceive a more accurate and precise description of coming events than the words of Christ (Matt. xx. 18, 19): "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles, to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him, and the third day He shall rise again"? Or what can be more plain and unmistakably evident than the predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem: "The days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, which shall not be cast down" (Luke xxi. 6, 24), "and they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled"? Who will draw the line, and say that the prophecies of Christ were fulfilled in His own Person, but that all that relates to the future must remain sealed up until the events come to pass? But we must bear in mind that when our Lord delivered the prophecies, all was future, both as regarded Himself, and what



relates to the Jews, the Church, and the world after His ascension into heaven. And if the promise of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost was made to be a test of the faith and obedience of the Church during those ten days of waiting and prayer, is it too much to say that the promises which remain to us of the spread of the gospel, the conversion of the Jews, the tribulation of the latter days, and the glorious advent of the Lord Jesus, are intended to keep alive, to strengthen, and to comfort the Church during the longer period of our looking and longing for His return? All we can say is, the mode and manner of the fulfilment of the past is a pledge and index to the fulfilment of the future.

And here, as space would fail me further to pursue the subject of prophetic exegesis, I venture to suggest a few rules with respect to the treatment of prophecy in the pulpit.

I. Let your interpretation of a passage of Scripture be as far as possible literal. This is Hooker's rule. That which is nearest to the literal will always be the best. The facts of Old Testament history of course occasionally admit of allegorical and spiritual application, such as Sarah and Hagar in Gal. iv. representing the two covenants; but without Scripture warrant it is always hazardous to give a spiritual sense to events which, as far as we can judge by Scripture, were not intended to be types and figures

of future things. This fanciful and imaginative form of teaching, begun probably by Origen, is fatal to the practical and effective exposition of prophecy. Let me give but one illustration, in Isaiah lxiii. 1—6. This is a passage of Scripture so suggestive of the sufferings of Christ, that it has been chosen as the text again and again for a Good Friday sermon, and is selected for the Epistle of the Monday before Easter; and yet, if compared with the first three verses of Isaiah lxi., no one can fail to trace the fact that the one describes the acceptable year of the Lord, and the other the day of vengeance: the one His first, the other His second advent. The appearance of the Redeemer in red apparel agrees with the description of Him in Rev. xix. 12, 13: "His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns, and He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God." This principle of literal interpretation is essential to a right exposition of the Jewish history; for the national, local, and temporal promises have never been abrogated or absorbed in the spiritual blessings secured to the world through them. And here I would make two remarks:—

(1.) There are many predictions in the Old Testament concerning Israel, which have purely a temporal and earthly termination—such as the restoration of the people, the reservation of the land, and the

rebuilding of the Temple—and some of these are expressed in language which resembles the promises of spiritual blessing given in the New Testament ; but if the rule I have suggested be observed, there will be no difficulty in giving to Israel what belongs to Israel, and to the Church what belongs to the Church. There will be a Jerusalem on earth as in Isa. lxx., and there will be a Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven as in Rev. xxi. 2. The one is the earthly abode of Jews, the other is the heavenly home of the saints of the first resurrection. The second remark is—

(2.) That prophecies have a progressive development. We do not see the complete fulfilment at once. Daubuz, in his *Symbolical Dictionary of Prophecy*, says : “In the Old Testament, thus prefigurative of the New, two or more incidents are commonly folded up in the same fact or prediction, so that such facts or predictions have their accomplishment in a fluxion or progression ; in relation to each of which, when effected, it may be truly said that such a thing was done in order that the fact prefigurative of it, or the prediction foretelling it, might be fulfilled.” Hence it is that as in history, so in prophecy, we have first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. There is a wonderful richness and fulness in the words of prophecy, which seem to be shooting forth their branches, which, like

the banyan tree, take fresh root and rise up again to occupy another and a wider sphere, and so going on in expansion until the whole purpose of God is fulfilled. Thus we may find a wilful king and an Antichrist in Antiochus Epiphanes. We may find him again in the Gnostics and Ebionites of St. John's day, when already there were more than one Antichrist; and further still, we may find him as our Reformers did, and some Roman Catholic writers too, in the Pope of Rome and in Mahomet; and there may be yet a further development of the man of sin in the lawless infidelity of democracy. And this gradual unfolding of the mysterious volume does not lead us to the conclusion that all is to be interpreted by one fulfilment, but that the revelation will increase in clearness and intensity as the years roll on.

2. But I pass on to a second canon of interpretation. It is what Professor Birks has well called the law of prophetic perspective. Events in the history of the future are presented to the mind much in the same way as objects in a landscape are presented to the eye. We see trees, or houses, or mountains, in the foreground and in the distance, and frequently two hill-tops or two trees will appear to stand so close the one to the other, as to fill one space of the foreground; but if we went to the spot, we should find that there is a considerable distance between them. And it is so with the language of prophecy :



the great events of the future are grouped together so closely that they seem to be one ; but if they are examined closely, they will be found to be widely apart. Mede says, "In the study of the prophetical Scriptures, it is of great moment to bear in mind that the prophets, for the most part, speak of the coming of Christ indefinitely and in general, without that distinction of first and second coming which the gospel out of Daniel hath more clearly taught us. And so consequently they spake of the things to be at Christ's coming indefinitely and all together, which we, who are now more fully informed by the revelation of the gospel of a twofold coming, must apply each of them to its proper time ; those things which befit the state of His first coming unto the first, and what befits the state of His second coming unto the second ; and what befits both alike may be applied unto both." To give one instance : We read of Messiah coming to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God (Isa. lxi. 2) ; but in Luke iv. our Lord, by closing the book at the words "acceptable year of the Lord," clearly showed that the day of vengeance was yet future, and eighteen hundred years have passed away, and it has not come yet. In like manner we argue that the Lord placing the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left will not be the act of a moment, but will admit of an interval, as it is in



Revelation xx., where the first resurrection precedes by a thousand years the resurrection of the rest of the dead and their judgment at the great white throne. This will apply to many similar expressions, and will enable us to map out more or less definitely the possible order of the Divine dispensations. By this rule of looking along the vista of the future, the confusion which arises from joining together what God has put asunder will be avoided.

3. But I hasten to one last suggestion. Let the personal pre-millennial advent of Christ occupy a prominent place in appeals to the conscience of your hearers.

If we had no other argument than that which the inspired writers of the New Testament have given to us, the importance of this rule would be evident ; for, with the exception of about two texts—and even these are not decisive as to the point at issue—we never find the Apostles urging the uncertainty of life or the near approach of death as a motive to zeal and holiness. The universal subject of appeal is the coming of the Lord (James iv. 14 ; 1 Cor. vii. 29). And there are many reasons for this. First, because practically few people are influenced, except at intervals, by the prospect of a sudden death ; they expect life may be prolonged indefinitely, and that when the last illness comes there will be space for repentance and preparation for eternity ; that they will be able

to settle their affairs, to make charitable distribution of their property, to leave goodwill and kindly feelings of forgiveness and of peace to those with whom they have enjoyed social acquaintance, and thus with a due and timely settlement of all their earthly concerns they will pass into eternity. But the second advent of Christ does not admit of any speculation of this sort. "Behold, I come as a thief; and when men shall say, Peace and safety, sudden destruction shall come upon them, as upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." We can imagine the case of a man who has been warned by his medical man that he has but a few hours to live, forming holy resolutions, hesitating before he makes up his mind whether he will surrender this or that portion of his property as a sacrifice to God and as an evidence of his piety, when, as he holds the pen in his hand, the lightning flash and the blazing heavens will take him unawares, and before he closes his eyes in death he will behold the Lord Jesus face to face, and receive of the things done in the body, whether they be good or evil. "He will judge the quick and dead at His appearing and kingdom," is a more awakening appeal than the prospect of death; and in Heb. ix. 27 the emphasis is upon the last clause—"It is appointed unto men once to die, but *after that* the judgment."

Again, in an evangelical sense we cannot propose

death as a motive, for there is always the idea of the curse connected with it, and no one would be justified in praying for death ; but the advent of Christ is the bright and blessed hope of the Church. Everything connected with it is full of immortality : it is the return of the Beloved ; it is the harvest-time of the Church ; it is the coming of the Bridegroom, the day of His espousals and of the gladness of His heart, when He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied ; it is that for which the Church longs with great desire ; it is that for which the Church prays, " Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus."

Once more, If it is used as an appeal to the unconverted, there is all the difference between the fear of death and the fear of judgment. St. Paul says, in 2 Cor. v. 11, " Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men ; for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ," etc., and in Heb. x. 30, 31, " For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." We have to do, not with an imaginary Christ, but with one who knew the bitterness of sin's exceeding sinfulness, who endured the wrath of God for our sakes, who was reckoned among the transgressors, and was forsaken of God, and who will in His second advent be "revealed from heaven

with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day.”

Now, modern thinkers—for I cannot call them theologians—may deny the immortality of the soul of ungodly men, as they may accept the Romish figment of purgatory, or they may adopt the irrational and unphilosophical theory of annihilation, or invent for themselves a notion of an indistinct glimmering of hope in the newly coined discovery of an æonian Gehenna; but they will never eradicate from the conscience of man, who consists of a body and a reasonable soul, the inward and secret conviction that this life is a season of probation, and that the advent of the Lord will decide for ever whether we are to live in His presence and in His likeness, or whether the door will be shut and the gulf be fixed, which will land us in outer darkness, and in separation from all that is holy and good and happy for ever. And I have yet to learn upon gospel principles, and the exalted view which is taken of the love of our Father in heaven, how the fires of purgatory and the penal sufferings which sin



brings along with it can produce repentance and love to God. The hardened heart in sin hardens still more under punishment ; its rebellion increases more and more, as with the fallen angels. It is the office of the Holy Ghost to convince of sin, and of the exalted Prince and Saviour to give repentance and remission of sin ; but when the final sentence shall have been spoken, "It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end," there can be no further change in the condition of the separated parties ; the one will drink of the fountain of life, the other will have their part in the lake of fire, which is the second death. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still ; he which is filthy, let him be filthy still ; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still ; and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I come quickly ; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

Finally. In the study of prophecy I venture to offer a word of caution, which is the result of many years' experience in dealing with this subject. It is this: Take heed of systems. Of prophetic writers it may be said, I fear, "Every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation." There may be much that is true in the works of Mede, and Horsley, and Newton,



and Elliott, and Faber, and writers of the Futurist school, but no one who reads history carefully, and compares their system as a whole with the signs of the times as they have developed in the progress of the age, will be content to call any one of them master. What we need to bear in mind is, first, that the one only infallible guide in the knowledge of prophecy is God the Holy Ghost. "He will guide you into all the truth ; He will show you things to come."

And secondly, I would observe that the shadows lessen as we approach the substance ; and as the time draws near we may expect clearer and more distinct marks of the Divine purpose. "Go thy way, Daniel ; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." And if this be so, we may in the spirit of prayer and of humble inquiry compare things spiritual with spiritual, and wait for the morning. It is not a little remarkable that the Holy Ghost has awakened the Church at different epochs to the assertion of certain truths, such as justification by faith at the Reformation, and the work of the Holy Ghost in the revival of this century ; and it would seem that the subject of our Lord's coming is now taking possession of the minds of the Lord's people to an extent it has never done before. May we not argue from this that it is the

subject specially suited to meet the errors of the day? and is it not one which is likely above all others to draw our hearts together in holy love and hope? "Thy watchmen shall see eye to eye when the Lord brings again Jerusalem."



Parish Work in its Relation to the Cure of  
Souls.

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## XII.

### *PARISH WORK IN ITS RELATION TO THE CURE OF SOULS.*

AS English clergymen, we are engaged in parish work, and we are entrusted with the cure of souls. Are, then, parish work and the cure of souls one and the same thing? If not, what is the relation between them? When these questions are answered, we can draw our practical conclusions.

I. The parish is a community, a congregated life, a territorial subdivision of the Church, an ecclesiastical compartment of the nation, a historical and transmitted arrangement. For the clergy, in the office which they bear, it is the prepared and prescribed field of action; and the character of the action must correspond to the character of the field. Parish work, therefore, is not a mission, nor the instruction of separated disciples, nor the pastorate of a voluntary congregation (however in great cities things may be tending that way). It is each of these, and more than all of them. It is the official ministry and presidency in a mingled life, with

diverse elements, forms, and appliances ; itself part of a larger life—namely, that of a national church, such as historic facts and inherited influences have made it.

Our duty is to fill our place rather than to fashion it. In the order on which God has put the world, it is fashioned for us. The materials to be dealt with, the opportunities to be used, the calls to be obeyed, are all there to begin with ; partly obligatory, partly optional. But even the optional occasions of work we do not generally invent. We find them awaiting us when we enter on the scene, or rising, as we go, before our steps.

The life of the Church, in its inward essence, is one and always the same ; but in its outward accidents it is local and variable, changing from age to age, as it is affected by the constant pressure of the course of this world, and by the incessant modifications of the atmosphere of thought. Parish work is done among these outward accidents, and consequently its exigencies, duties, and possibilities, even under a system professedly unaltered, are not precisely the same in one generation as they were in that which preceded it—a fact of which one who finds himself in a second generation of the ministry becomes, I can assure you, very sensible. Survey for a moment its constituent elements, as they now exist—some, as I have said, obligatory, some op-

tional, some common to us all, some holding a place in one locality which they scarcely find in another. They are such as these: the celebration of divine offices in the congregation, in common prayer, administration of the sacraments, and the public preaching of the Word; the blessing of marriages, the burial of the dead, the visitation of the sick; the preparation for confirmation, the Sunday-school, instruction for particular classes or on special occasions, the cottage lecture, the prayer-meeting, the Bible-class, missionary aggressions on those without; the collecting and distributing of alms, the providing and superintending district visitors, Sunday-school teachers, lay readers, deaconesses, Bible-women, recognised servants of the Church by whatever name described; the general pastoral visitation for distinct spiritual intercourse, and for the cultivation of acquaintance and influence with the people; the watchfulness over public morals; the dealing as we can with scandals, dissensions, and calamities; the support and care of schools, with the ever-augmenting trouble caused by new Acts and codes and restrictions, and relations with the Committee, the Board, and the Department; the public meetings for countless religious objects; the part to be taken in the missionary work of the Church; the Temperance movement, with its entertainments and Bands of Hope; the network of societies and organi-

zations in which our feet are getting entangled; the associations for the young; the trouble to be taken about church arrangements and accessories of public worship; especially the choir, tea-meetings, and social gatherings, the presidency of vestries, the co-operation with other authorities, the general part to be taken in all movements for the public good.

Consider this multifarious mass of occupation, which appears to be ever increasing, and you have before you the parish work of our time, in which, in our different measures, we are rightly or inevitably engaged. As elders of the Church, we have a recognized place in the general life of a Christian people, whose recognition of the office is part of their Christian profession, creating for us the duties which we owe them in return. We are stewards of God in an ancient household, which has inherited old habits, and is ever generating new exigencies.

Now turn to the cure of souls. What do we mean in speaking of souls? We are then thinking of men, not collectively, but distributively—as individual, personal, immortal. We are separating the man from his accidents, even from that body which is for the present a part of himself. We are looking on his present as a stage in his eternal history, and regarding him as the object of the grace, and the subject of the judgment, of God. Let me quote some words of

Dr. Newman's. (I heard them from the pulpit, in distant days not to be forgotten.)

"The point to be considered is this, that every soul of man, which is or has been on earth, has a separate existence; and that in eternity, not in time merely—in the unseen world, not merely in this—not only during its mortal life, but ever from the hour of its creation, whether joined to a body of flesh or not. Nothing is more difficult than to realize that every one of all the millions who live, or have lived, is as whole and independent a being in himself as if there were no one else in the world but he."

He goes on to speak of our habit of regarding men collectively, "classing them in masses, as we might connect the stones of a building," for instance, in the case of an army or a nation.

"They seem for a short time to be some one thing; and we, from our habit of living by sight, regard them as one, and drop the notion of their being anything else. And when this one dies, and that one dies, we forget that it is the passages of separate immortal beings into an unseen state, that the whole which appears is but appearance, and that the component parts are the realities. . . . Survey some populous towns: crowds are pouring through the streets; while the shops are full, and the houses too, could we see into them. Every part of it is full of life. Hence we gain a general idea of splendour, opulence, and



energy. But what is the truth? Why, that every being in that great concourse is his own centre, and all things about him are but shades, but 'a vain shadow, in which he walketh and disquieteth himself in vain.' He has his own hopes, fears, desires, judgments, and aims: he is everything to himself, and no one else is really anything. He must live with himself for ever. He has a depth within him unfathomable, an infinite abyss of existence; and the scene in which he 'bears part for the moment is but like a gleam of sunshine on its surface.'"

This is what is said to be so hard for us to realize, when we have to do with collections of people. "We cannot understand that a multitude is but a collection of immortal souls."

But that is precisely what, as ministers of Christ, we have to understand; for Christ did not redeem the parish, nor will He judge the congregation. These collections of people with whom we have to do have no doubt their corporate aspect, as has the Church itself of which they are a part; but that aspect is only on the surface; and, as we look earnestly upon it, it coheres no longer, but breaks up into its component parts, separate immortal souls in their eternal relations with God; and these are our charge for which we must give account.

The cure of souls, then, involves whatever on our part can affect the spiritual state, or shape the spiritual

history, of men thus regarded. We “seek for Christ’s sheep which are scattered abroad, that they may be saved through Christ for ever,” not knowing who they are, but seeking them by indiscriminate endeavours for “all men, that we may by all means save some.” For this seeking and saving, we rely on the Divine instrument committed to us,—“the word of God, which is able to save the soul,” applying and adapting its various powers directly, indirectly, in public and in private. Whatever may prepare for salvation, whatever may commence, advance, secure, complete it, is included in the work; understanding by salvation not only an event, but a state and a history—not only the rescue, but the health and soundness of the soul.

This glance at each side of our subject is enough. Plainly the parish work and the cure of souls are not the same thing; they do not, in a mathematical sense, coincide on the whole, however they may do so partially. The first is wider than the second, and may be much less deep; it has respect to the general life of the community, and is busy on the surface of things. It is certainly possible, perhaps it is not uncommon, for a man to do much in the first while he does little in the second. There are probably not a few parishes where things are kept going with much devotion both of labour and power; where there are attractive services, able preaching, good schools, and

all sorts of activities and organizations; but where there is no proportionate apprehension of, and no proportionate provision for, the real wants of individual immortal souls. There may be a lively scene on the surface, but not much going on beneath it.

On the other hand, it is plain that the relation between parish work and the cure of souls (if both be rightly understood) is of the very closest. The two may only partially coincide, but they coincide at the centre. The cure of souls still remains the central essential part of the parish work, which has grown around it and spread beyond it into remoter and more secular connections, but which is still its field and framework, securing its conditions, and furnishing its occasions, and deriving from that relation all its own proper worth and honour.

II. The questions with which I started being answered, the practical conclusions follow.

I. It is our obvious duty to give the first place—yes, and the second and the third—to *those parts of parish work which are also directly, and by their proper nature, parts of the cure of souls.*

It is easy to give this counsel; not always easy to comply with it. The restlessness and complexity of the public life around us affect us all. In many, very many positions, they more than affect, they almost overwhelm us. Demands on time and attention multiply. Compliance with one opens the way for

others. In proportion to the importance of a man's place, to his personal influence, to his capacity for business, or for being in any way of use, the calls are more continual. There is a meeting here, a committee there. Shall we pass our lives in presiding, conferring, organizing, defending? in managing other people, and getting things done? We might easily be lost in this superficial life. I do not say we should drop the spiritual work; but it would be shrunk, and the heart taken out of it. The danger is not new or peculiar to our day or our Church. It showed itself at once. "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." From the first moment it was necessary that the office which we hold should be protected by this resolve. A Divine foresight has perpetuated the apostolic sayings, uttered on typical though passing occasions, as irreversible sentences to guard and guide the Church in altered circumstances and distant ages. We at this day have special reasons to recall the sentence just recited.

In parish work the ministry of the Word is but another name for the cure of souls. It is our business so to regard it, so to treat it; and that is not always done. No doubt, whatever is spoken in the ministry of the Word, if it be truly spoken, is of some sort of use. But there is a difference between



that which has an aim and that which has none. There is a kind of preacher of whom it has been said, "He aims at nothing, and hits it." And where there is an aim, it is often sidelong, to prove some abstract point, or discuss a question of the day, or present an imaginative picture, without any serious purpose of personal application to the hearers. As they were not present in the study when the sermon was composed, perhaps they were forgotten; and the treatment of the subject seemed itself to be the end, instead of a means to an effect beyond.

If preaching be a part of the cure of souls, it must aim at the soul, and we have remembered what that word intends. This aim is definite, but it is manifold. It means that the preacher or teacher is conscious of the actual state of living men and women in their relations to truth, to salvation, and to God; conscious of the delusions in which they acquiesce, of the shifts to which they resort, of the debates going on within them, of the strangely inconsistent feelings at work in the same breast, of the Protean nature of man, never more Protean than in his relations with the word that is meant to save him; conscious of the wants, anxieties, inquiries, conflicts, which that word is to arouse and to meet; conscious of the dubious symptoms, the precarious conditions that belong to awakening souls, of the different exigencies created by different circumstances, by successes, disappoint-



ments, sorrows, temptations, falls ; conscious of the growing demands, the expanding capacities, the expectant sympathies of souls that are alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. I am not advocating those refinements of introspection which make much of our literature unhealthy, nor a subtle mental analysis which not one in a thousand can conduct ; but I say that he who aims at the good of souls must, according to his measure of perception, deal with souls as they really are. You may make your broad distinctions—converted and unconverted, believers and unbelievers ; you *must* make them, enough to have it felt that those lines are really drawn by Him “who seeketh and judgeth.” But in our hands these bare outlines give no personal features ; and if we go no farther, the multitude eludes our classification, and escapes our hands. Our business is with actual facts and feelings which we have to treat, and in which we recognize the processes which tend, the tokens which point, to the one side or the other. So Scripture deals with men, and teaches us to deal with them ; not merely sorting them out in masses, but noting their individual characters. In the narratives of what they say or do, or in the reproofs and exhortations of the Epistles, our attention is fixed on the particular conditions of mind, while the state on the whole is left with God. In saying that the preacher should be “conscious” of these conditions, I did not

mean that he should occupy himself in describing them, but that he should speak under such a sense of them as will give point and direction to his message. The message itself is the word of the truth of the gospel and the doctrine which is according to godliness. Only, in the cure of souls, this is not to be delivered as a testimony, but to be applied as a power, with intent to awaken, convince, and convert, to inform and enlighten, to animate and console, to save and sanctify.

The preaching of the Word in the congregation stands first among those parts of parish work which are properly and directly instruments in the cure of souls. But what has been said applies not only to the Sunday sermon, but to all ancillary kinds of teaching in occasional or informal assemblies, in classes, schools, or pastoral visitation. In these the instruction naturally derives its adaptation from the circumstances, and fits itself to the case before us, as we are brought closer to the capacities and necessities of the poor, or the young, or some distinct class of hearers. These separate methods of dealing with souls have on this account a special value; not, indeed, as a substitute for, but as an addition to, the teaching in the congregation; for people are the better for being taught apart, but they are also the better for being taught together, feeling themselves parts of the general body of the Church, and sharing

in the common word of "the common salvation." But we have great cause to prize and improve the opportunities which our system of parish work affords for special and separate teaching. We know, for instance, what effective use may be made of the preparation of candidates for confirmation, when at a critical turning-point of life the young are delivered into our hands to work on their hearts as God may help us ; or what an occasion for cultivating a higher character of spiritual thought and faith and life in Christ is given by a quiet and devout meeting of communicants.

But all such work as this needs to be united with the *habitual intercourse with individual souls*. This is the more to be mentioned because in large parishes and in busy life there is a strong temptation to drop it. It is natural to say, How can I turn my time to account in that way, when there is so much to be done on a larger scale? What proportion of this multitude could thus be reached? If I should visit five people in a day, what are they among five thousand? So with many pastors pastoral visitation ceases. I have known men come out of town parishes, where it had thus been abandoned, into country parishes, where it was both feasible and essential, having lost the habit, which they have seemed unable to recover. But personal intercourse is not only of use to the parishioner, it is of great

importance to the pastor for the tone and spirit of his ministry. It is a necessary corrective to the habit of mind engendered by dealing with assemblies and the influences of a public life. It keeps the individual soul in view as the reality with which we have to deal. It humbles and warns us too, by making us feel what utter misapprehensions of the truth, what evasions of it, what resistances to it, are going on under the surface of the orderly and attentive congregation. It furnishes us with typical instances of religious conditions and experiences, which show what we have to meet and consider in the public ministry of the Word. These and the like benefits to ourselves are to be taken into account in addition to the positive help and comfort afforded to particular souls entrusted to us by the great Shepherd of the sheep.

2. I turn from the distinctly spiritual parts of parish work to its *general system, as affording a field and framework for the cure of souls*. If so, it is our duty to carry out that general system, and to do so for this particular end.

There is sometimes need to uphold this duty. A man may be struck with the absence of immediate spiritual aim in much that belongs to his place, and may be disposed to limit himself to what seems to bear directly on the souls of his people. I have known parishes where the ministry has been thus confined, and the ultimate effect has been at variance



with the intention : and no wonder, for our providential position in the general Christian life of the community cannot be abdicated without detriment to the highest interests in our charge. The means and appliances of good influence fail, and a languid and dissatisfied state ensues, from which the religious life must suffer.

It is evident, in the first place, that the general parish work on its more secular side is subsidiary to the spiritual, as aiming to give it a fair field by efforts directed against ignorance, improvidence, intemperance, by the improvement of social habits, by the increase of intelligence, by the diminution of temptations, and by taking up stumbling-blocks out of the way.

Next, it is to be observed that this kind of work has an important use as exhibiting what may be called the secondary effects of Christianity ; and we must remember that it is in the border-land between the secular and spiritual, and through appreciation of things obviously good and useful, that men are disposed to consider the principles and listen to the truths with which they see these things to be connected. It is a rule for us in our work as clergymen, as well as in our lives as Christians—"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."



Yet again, a well-ordered parish, with various useful activities, affords assistance to the cure of souls in the way of educating spiritual life by calls to service and prepared exercises of duty. "Ye shall call upon them to do work" is as much a part of this education as "Ye shall call upon them to hear sermons;" and time which is spent in "provoking to love and to good works," and in the association in them which follows, is not deducted from, but added to, that which is passed in the cure of souls.

Finally, the connection of parish work on the whole with the essential part of it which we call the cure of souls is to be regarded in the light of a larger fact. The spiritual life on earth is by the will of God a part of a general life associated with the external scenes by which it is affected on all sides and in all ways. We cannot isolate the spiritual life, as if the soul were one being and the man were another. What a variety of influences seem to have a share in shaping the inward state, and telling upon eternal destinies! What a mystery is this human heart in relation to its present surroundings, now touched and attracted, now hardened and repelled, in ways we could not anticipate! It draws its inspirations and assistances from all quarters, with a freedom that will not be forced. It assimilates ideas which it meets by chance, while inaccessible to others which are pressed upon it. It guards itself against

a deliberate aim, and lies open to the arrow shot at a venture. Why note these things? To remind ourselves that whatever may be done by direct aim and intention, perhaps more is done unconsciously and indirectly.

It is, I think, a principle to be recognised, that in the cure of souls there is larger fruit from influence than from effort (not from influence without effort, for then the influence would not exist). Probably more souls are affected by our work on the sides than in the front; more by oblique impressions than by our direct arguments and persuasions; more, too, by derived and associated influences than by that which is personal and immediate. Other sources of influence than ourselves ought to spring and form around us. A congregation which has a sense of interest, union, and life, generates its own influences within and beyond itself. There is a power in congregated numbers, in the full communion, in the warm response, in the tone of reverence and devotion. There is a power in genuine conversions, in men visibly advancing in virtue and godliness, in characters which rise above the common level to shine as lights in the world, and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. There is a power in a general spirit of life and activity, of order and unity, and in the presence on the right hand and on the left of things edifying, useful, wholesome.

These and the like are the influences I mean, ever telling insensibly on individual souls. I call them derived and associated in so far as it is our part to originate or sustain them, or to attract and associate them to ourselves. It is, as we all know, through these that much of the cure of souls is fulfilled. It is happier for us than if we felt ourselves commissioned to be the sole converters of our brethren, or the framers of their life towards God by authoritative spiritual direction. Our personal work may be traceable but a little way, but we may be communicating impulses which reproduce themselves, and spread in widening circles.

What encouragement does this give to our work on the whole! making us feel that all good influences which we can create are potentially precious; that even the minor parts of our ministry work in with the general system, and may contribute in some sidelong way to results we long for; and that prayers and pains are proper to whatever we do in "taking care of the Church of God." It does more. It brings our action into conscious unison with the action of the Spirit of God, breathing where He lists, and working how He will. We know not whence He cometh, or whither He goeth; but we know that He is the Spirit of *promise*, and that, in parish work and cure of souls, we serve not the Lord Christ without the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

## Pastoral Visitation.

BY THE REVEREND WILLIAM CADMAN, M.A., PREBENDARY OF  
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### XIII.

#### *PASTORAL VISITATION.*

MY subject is "Pastoral Visitation"; about which I may observe by way of preface that what I shall say is gathered not from books or the opinions of others, but is simply the result of my own experience during the past thirty-seven years.

The duty of Pastoral Visitation seems to me to rest upon a Divine command. We are told to be diligent to know the state of our flocks, and to look well to our herds (Prov. xxvii. 23). If we give a spiritual meaning to these directions, it is manifest that the *public* ministry of the Word and its ordinances is not sufficient for the manifestation of *all* the diligence that is required in order to know the condition of our parishes and the state of our flocks. The public ministry of the Word needs to be supplemented by pastoral watchfulness.

The Church requires this of all her ministers. Her deacons are to "search for the sick, poor, and impotent people of the parish"—to ascertain their estates, names, and places where they dwell. This implies

pastoral visitation. Her priests are to be "ready to use both public and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole, within their cures." This, again, involves pastoral visitation. The principle, therefore, of pastoral work we all acknowledge. We must supplement the outward ordinances of the Church by making personal rounds of inspection, so as to ascertain by friendly calls or visits the state of the different members of our flock. We have not to wait for the people to enter the church, but we must go out to "*compel* them to come in." Fishers of men will not be contented with merely casting their nets—they will desire to learn how and where to cast them to the greatest advantage; and in order to do this, acquaintance must be gained as to the habits and conditions and characters of their people.

Here, however, I wish to make two explanations. When I speak of Pastoral Visitation, I mean Pastoral Visitation *as respects the clergy*, though I do not wish to imply that none but the clergy are to be engaged in this good work. Happily, Christian workers among the lay members of our congregations are increasing rapidly. Numbers of the laity recognise the importance of this visitation by the help which they cheerfully give to those set apart to the sacred office. It is impossible to overrate the help thus given by Scripture readers, district visitors, and

voluntary teachers, at Bible-classes, mothers' meetings, cottage lectures, etc.

Moreover, as a second word of explanation, I would observe that if I do not speak now of the work of others outside our own Church, it is not because I mean to ignore them on the ground that they follow not with us. No true Churchman would wish to forbid any one seeking to destroy the evils of ignorance and vice, and contempt of God's word and commandments. These are evils against which we too contend; and they that are not against us are on our part. But even so, it is well to know what agencies for good or evil are working amongst us. We do not ignore or underrate the good work of others when we seek to perfect our own.

These things premised, the work of a pastor carries with it the necessity for pastoral visitation. For the purpose of doing that work I think we should bear in mind several particulars. A pastor must feed the lambs and sheep of the fold. He must guard against members of the flock straying from that fold. He must mend and repair the hedges and enclosures of that fold. He must search for the lost. He must try and reclaim the straying and wandering. He must try to heal the morally sick and the diseased. He must give all his care and diligence to protect the fold over which he is appointed the shepherd.

How then is he set about this? At the commencement of one's ministry I grant there are many difficulties in the way. In the present day, however, the younger clergy have in many cases the advantage of the counsel of their elder brethren. It is the bounden duty of the elder clergy to show them sympathy and brotherly kindness, and to introduce them to their work. On the other hand, it is the duty of the younger brethren to give their full confidence to those with whom they are to labour; to seek to be *a comfort* to them; to do nothing new without consulting them; to submit to them their plans, in order that they may be sanctioned, or modified, or adapted to the circumstances of the parish, with which the incumbent may be supposed to be better acquainted than a younger man just introduced.

It is of prime importance, however, to get a knowledge of one's people. In populous places and large cities it may not be possible to gain an intimate acquaintance with the different families of the parish; but in country places it is otherwise. I have occupied country positions, and I know it is quite possible to gain a tolerably accurate knowledge of the various residents in a country parish. You can speak to every one, and the small change of benevolence and courtesy is never so circulated as to be lost. We can speak to the labourer in the field about his

seeds; to the waggoner about his team; to the farmer about his crops; to the squire about his tenants; and to the poor about their children,—and moreover make use of all these, not as subjects of conversation only, but as vehicles for conveying our all-important message. To the old people we can talk about the famous things (as they think them) that are connected with the history of their parish; for every parish has its history, and every parishioner likes the parson to show an interest in what he thinks makes *his* parish distinguished from every other.

Again, we can keep a diary, and note down our conversations with parishioners. Half an hour spent in this way every day will be found to pay well. It is of immense advantage, even in the smallest parish. Through pursuing this plan I am able to recall conversations I had with persons in my parish more than thirty years ago. I may add that individual examples are thus found of the characteristics of human nature and the working of Divine grace, such as are afterwards met with on a larger scale among the teeming multitudes of our crowded populations.

In large towns the difficulty of pastoral visitation is considerably increased, and nothing can be done without organization and arrangement. But suppose that such organization does not already exist, how is the clergyman to begin his work? I say, Begin with *the young*. If in a poor and neglected parish a



Sunday or night school does not exist, begin one, even though it be in the very humblest form. Any sort of room, in which a few children can be gathered—a donkey shed, a carpenter's room, or a deserted crockery warehouse,—any or all of these, if no better can be had, may be adapted for the present purpose. Begin, and no difficulty will be found in getting a congregation. Children can always be collected, though a regular attendance cannot always be easily sustained. The effort to do them good will be invaluable in its bearing on pastoral visitation. The clergyman will soon find his work increasing on his hands.

But if schools exist already, then give the religious instruction your earnest care. Make it as prominent a feature as possible; watch over the secular instruction also; examine the registers, look after absentees; especially call upon children that are sick. Parents appreciate all this attention, and so the child prepares the way for pastoral visitation. The clergyman soon becomes known, and he gradually gains the confidence of his flock. While visiting he hears of the sick, the sorrowful, the bereaved; and a kind word, a kind letter, a kind action, sometimes a kind *look*, is a seed from which grows an immensity of influence for pastoral visitation.

Whilst this is going on, it will be well to begin to organize (for I am supposing a case where organization does not already exist). For this purpose take

a map of the parish (such a map is easily to be obtained now by reason of the survey that has been made), and mark it out into manageable divisions. Suppose you go on the now generally recognised principle that 2,000 persons are sufficient for the attention of any one clergyman. Determine then on one spot for special effort in which there are concentrated this number of souls, or thereabouts. I would say, select this smaller district rather than waste effort by desultory work in a larger area. Choose first some special spot, and then occupy the remainder with what speed you may by the help of additional agencies. I believe that a persevering effort of this kind, even for a few weeks, will avail the pastor more than working over a larger space, and he will be driven to ask additional help—although even this will impose additional work, because he will then have the superintendence of the labours of others.

If those who have not yet had experience will take a lesson from those who have sometimes burnt their fingers in this matter, they will bear a few words on the importance of clerical caution in connection with lay liberality. In business transactions, such as the hire of rooms, the purchase of a site, etc., it is well that the clergyman should not be the negotiating agent. The moment it is known he wants a room or a piece of land, the price in the market goes up amazingly. It is far better for the clergyman to ask

the help of his churchwardens or some lay friend in whom he has confidence. It is well for him to see his way before he begins to incur large expense, lest there should ensue discouragement in his efforts, lest broken spirits and perhaps broken health should cause him to say, "Oh, it is no use trying," or, "I must give up the attempt to do what I find I can never accomplish."

Whilst speaking, however, of parochial agencies, let me thankfully call your attention to the existence of well-known societies which render assistance, such as the Church Pastoral Aid Society, also, I must add, the Additional Curates' Society, to say nothing of other societies of this kind. Any help that can be obtained in this way is important, not to save the clergyman work, but to enable him to do his work more efficiently, and so to give effect to pastoral visitation.

But supposing the organization established, the next question is how to carry it on. Here, then, I would give a prominent place to the institution of a series of afternoon or evening readings. Call them "cottage lectures" if you will, though in the large towns the name seems as inappropriate as that of a "rural dean" to a man who knows little of rural scenery. For the present, however, we will call them cottage lectures. To establish one, ask through a Bible-woman or lay agent for the loan of a room,

invite the people of the house (for it may contain many families), or invite the neighbours to come, who cannot walk as far as the church by reason of rheumatic affections or such-like infirmities, and so have your audience of, say, a dozen people collected on the day assigned. The clergyman, punctual to his engagement, enters, and salutes those that are assembled in the room. He then takes his Bible, or what sometimes is better still, the Bible of the house, that has been put on the table for his use, and then asking for God's blessing he seeks to expound some portion of the Scriptures, and ends with prayer. The whole of this service need not occupy more than twenty minutes. He may stop afterwards to speak *to those who may wish to speak to him*, and he will frequently find persons desirous of doing so. And in this manner he may often hear of persons of whom before he knew nothing, but who will be glad to give him a welcome if he will call upon them. In these lectures he can administer caution, or advice, or reproof, as the case requires. Three such meetings might be taken in one afternoon, without unduly taxing a clergyman's strength, and thus virtually thirty-six persons may be personally visited in the time that is sometimes given to three. I cannot over-estimate a plan like this, when with heart and soul it is entered into and persevered in.

I may now mention another plan to economise



time and work, and to maintain the efficiency of pastoral visitation. It is the consultation of the church's *registers*, by means of which we find the anniversaries of our people's joys and sorrows. A *congratulatory* visit may be paid on the anniversary of a marriage, an *inquiry* visit may be paid on the anniversary of a baptism, or soon after a churching, or after a confirmation. A *sympathetic* visit may be paid where a list is kept of deaths or of funerals. In our town populations burial registers are not now commonly kept, but it is well to note from time to time the date of "the departure" of parishioners, and if a letter be sent, or a call made on the survivors, much good may be done thereby. These attentions, resulting from the perusal of the church registers, show that the people's interests are near to the pastor's thoughts, and that he can rejoice with those that do rejoice, and mourn with those who weep, and a hold is thereby gained upon the affections of his people. In populous towns this carrying out of the parochial system is difficult; but the parochial system is such a good one, that I do think we ought to do all we can to support and increase its efficiency.

Next let me say I think it wise to take advantage of *providential circumstances*. If I see the blinds drawn down or the window-shutters up, I know that there is an opening in God's providence for *inquiry*, and for a word in season, which may prove refreshing



to the sorrowful and to the weary. I add to these suggestions the importance of conveying in every possible way to the knowledge of our parishioners that we are *accessible* to them, and that no hour of the day or night could be mentioned that we are not willing to devote to the welfare and comfort of our people, if strength be permitted to us, or if other duties do not interfere. I know very well that unreasonable and unseasonable applications are sometimes made on a clergyman. Unreasonable, because he is asked in the midst of his Sunday work to visit some particular case which might possibly be visited just as well on the morrow; and sometimes unseasonable, because he may be called out at any hour, just like a medical man—only that the medical man is paid for his visit, and the clergyman is not. I call these unreasonable and unseasonable requests. Nevertheless, it will be found that the effort and self-denial required in order to meet such requests will increase the confidence the people repose in the clergyman, and will often provide an opportunity for him to give some testimony about his Master and His great salvation, which perhaps would be at no other time so much in season or be so well received.

A word or two of caution may, however, be added here, lest what I have said should be mistaken. While sometimes exposed to unreasonable and unseasonable applications from our people, we must

take care never to be unreasonable or unseasonable in our visits to them. For example, we have no right to *intrude* upon them. A poor man's abode, whether a cellar, an attic, or a garret, is as sacred to him as to its owner is the mansion of the rich. If we call at meal-time, or at a time when it is inconvenient to receive a visitor, apologies should of course be made, with the added remark that we will call again at a time more suitable. Again, in visiting the sick, we ought not to be long with them. A few appropriate words framed upon or suggested by some text of Scripture, with a short prayer, will be all that in some cases the sick person can bear, and to remain any longer would be inconvenient to both patient and friends, as well as prejudicial to the object we have in view. We must, moreover, make a point of visiting all sorts of cases; not only the pleasant and agreeable, but those also where our visits seem less appreciated. Look at the physician going his rounds in the hospital. *All* the cases are examined: some are of the disagreeable kind, whilst others do not excite repulsion. So ought it to be with the clergyman. Every person has a claim upon him—both the froward and the meek.

I would here suggest of what importance it is to be *good listeners*. This is especially necessary where a visit is paid to those who speak only of their sorrows, and tell you they have had so many they

could write a book about them. It is very disagreeable to have to do this, but still to be a good listener gives confidence, and sometimes affords occasion to put in a seasonable word to lift up the thoughts from earth to heaven. Whilst, however, we are good listeners when parishioners are speaking of their own sorrows, we must not encourage talk about or against neighbours. We must at once close *such* conversation, and talk of something more profitable.

In the next place, we ought not to press things of secondary importance, as if they were first and foremost. If possible, let us try to communicate Christ first, and all other truth, important as it is in connection with Him, will then take its right place. We ought, I think, to tolerate the expression of difference of opinion, whether on political or social or religious subjects. A Christian minister's business in his visits is *to bring souls to Christ*. He does not go to find fault with everybody else, and to "deal damnation round the land on each he thinks God's foe."

Two objections here arise before me, about which it is necessary to give a passing word. Some will say, perhaps, that such pastoral visitation as I have recommended is out of the question, that it would leave no time for reading, or the composition of sermons. My answer is, that such pastoral visitation as I speak of gets material together for the most

telling and appropriate sermons that can be preached. If the plan recommended be followed, of making short digests of conversation as soon as possible after an interview, it will be found very frequently that suggestions arise in connection with God's Word, which give thoughts for a sermon which may be composed under the influence of those thoughts, and which will prove to be a word in season to many of our congregation. I believe, moreover, that the study of God's Word and the study of the human heart go together. In the human heart you have the intimation of the disease, so to speak; in the study of God's Word you have the pharmacopœia which gives the remedy.

Another objection is, that frequent Church services, where they exist, hinder pastoral visitation. I cannot say that I think this need be the case. I am not about to enter upon the question whether in all cases frequent services are desirable, nor upon the question as to what constitutes "a reasonable hindrance" to them. But supposing that the circumstances of a clergyman's parish are such that there are some persons who wish to avail themselves of the opportunities of frequently meeting together in the house of prayer for a short time, I have always thought that half an hour spent in prayer, and in the reading of God's Word, would prove to be anything but unprofitable in furnishing Christian thoughts for



the subsequent duty of pastoral visitation. Some verse of the Psalms, some verse of the Lesson, some part of the Prayers, coming home with new light and energy, gives the clergyman thoughts which he carries about with him during the day, and which are found to be just what he needs in cases that come before him for special advice.

The great permanent object, however, in all that we have to do in connection with pastoral visitation must not be lost sight of. It is simply this—to be a witness for Christ and His truth. An effective pastor must be a pastor everywhere, to everybody, and always. He must, if he be wise, seek to win souls. If this be borne in mind, it will put in their right place all questions of minor matters, such as recreation, athletics, rinks, boats, and spelling bees. The due consideration of the object of his calling will help him to guard against the possible danger of forgetting his character as a clergyman; whilst, in addition to this, he will be further helped if he bring before God every night all the cases of those with whom he has been brought into contact during the day. The habit of praying for persons with whom one has been brought in contact is to be encouraged, because it is of great advantage to ourselves, as well as a help to the work of pastoral visitation.

All this, however, necessitates the conclusion that



the work can be properly appreciated only when we view it with reference to immortal souls, their danger their value, their redemption ; with reference to the judgment to come, and to the final acceptance of our heavenly Master. The old true saying comes rushing to the mind, "Like people, like priest." We ought to be first and foremost in advancing or carrying out Christian work ; but if any of us would do this, he must be himself a "man of God." By this I mean he must be one like Elijah, who stood in the presence of God, and therefore feared not the face of man ; or like Enoch, who "walked with God," and so one who can bear testimony against the ungodly deeds of the generation with which he has to do ; or like St. Paul, whose heart's desire and prayer to God for even blinded and rejecting Israel was that they might be saved ; or like Antipas, Christ's faithful witness, of whom his Lord makes honourable mention. If we are not seeking in some sense like this to be "a man of God," some part of our work will be neglected ; and if so, no one can fully prove himself "a minister of Christ." A fearful thing it is for the Master's message to reach one who can give no satisfactory answer to the question, "Where is thy flock, thy beautiful flock?"

Let me conclude with a word of encouragement to younger clergymen. The ministry of the gospel of

Christ leads us to a position that is the most happy, the most honourable, and the most useful that can possibly be held on this side the grave. We are always reminded by the very work we do for Christ, that it cannot be done efficiently or comfortably, unless we keep in daily communion with our heavenly Master. I am sure this is an honour and a privilege that cannot be over-stated.

In connection with it let me say that we have reason to be thankful that God has called us to be ministers of the reformed Church of England. We have the catholic truth that was once for all delivered to the saints, and because catholic, therefore antagonistic to all that has since sprung up in contradiction to that ancient truth. No greater wish can I express for my younger brethren than that the longer they live the more may they be attached to that Scriptural truth that we have in our English Church.

One word more. It is that our hope for the future is bright and blessed and glorious. We may not always see the result of our labours here; for we may be amongst those who *sow* the seed—"One soweth and another reapeth;" but the day is coming when it will be seen that he who has been sowing in faith will join with him who reaps with thankfulness, and will doubtless come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

*At the conclusion of the address the following questions were put to and answered by the lecturer :—*

*Question.*—In visiting the poor, is it desirable to avail oneself of the several compendiums that have been published of late years, especially with reference to choosing beforehand what should be read? or is it better to leave things to the inspiration of the moment?

*Answer.*—My own opinion decidedly would be that you should read the compendium before you go, and judge whether what you read is likely to interest the person whom you visit. It is quite possible to be reading when there is no listening, and therefore I should judge rather by the interest of the patient whether the reading of the compendium or speaking on the subject previously read be the more desirable.

*Question.*—How can we best deal with Roman Catholics, Jews, and infidels, and those who refuse our ministrations?

*Answer.*—If a Jew or any other would listen to me, I should not at first enter upon a discussion of disputed things, but I should try to impress the thought that as sinners they need a Saviour; and then that that Saviour is the Lord Jesus Christ. As to those who will not receive us, we cannot *force* ourselves upon them; but I should not give up easily. I would rather say, If at first you do not succeed, “try, try, and try again.” The every-day

courtesies of life have their uses in such cases. For instance, you might meet them in the street, and bid them "Good morning,"—and I have noticed that even raising the hat and paying such-like civilities has sometimes a very softening and conciliating effect. Therefore I should persevere, without unduly pressing myself upon them, but at the same time never letting slip an opportunity of acting upon their better feelings, in the hope that I might be able to allure them into the path of truth and salvation.

*Question.*—What course is it desirable to pursue in respect of visiting public-houses, into which it might look suspicious for a clergyman to enter?

*Answer.*—I should suggest that our Lord's plan be borne in mind, "two and two." Let the clergyman take some one with him. The same remark would hold when sent for to visit houses of ill fame. With public-houses, my own experience has been that I have found the greatest willingness on the part of the publicans to listen to pastoral advice; much greater than, previous to experience, I should have supposed. I certainly think that public-houses should be visited, but this requires to be done with discretion.

*Question.*—Is it justifiable, under any circumstances, not to visit a house in which there is a case of infectious disease?

*Answer.*—This is a matter in which, I think, the prudence of a medical man is required; and not only



so, but one in which the *duty* of a medical man has to be performed. There are, however, two ways of doing this duty. There is a way of doing it rashly, and there is a way of doing it prudently. Let me draw an instance from actual life. Suppose a clergyman has been preaching or giving a lecture, and at the close of the day, when his strength is exhausted, and when perhaps he has but little food on his stomach, he is called out to visit a case of small-pox. Duty bids him go, but he must do it discreetly. Let him go home first, and partake of food, and also get a little rest; and then, after using such precautions as are advisable, let him go forth believing that the path of duty will be the path of safety.

*Question.*—Would you recommend that servants, whether male or female, be visited at the same time as their masters and mistresses?

*Answer.*—It is hardly possible to lay down a rule in order to meet this question. Of course you have no right to interfere with the servants' work; and to visit and call upon the servants without the consent of the master or mistress would be to introduce domestic discord. In large establishments permission may sometimes be obtained for an address in the servants'-hall; and we should be on the look-out for opportunities to say a word to servants, as for instance when they open the door for us on our entry or leaving. Another plan is to have a special service



in the church for servants. Coachmen, footmen, and persons of that class, come to such a service, and they come with great cheerfulness. I know of such a service which answers well, and is held for half an hour every Sunday evening at nine o'clock for coachmen, footmen, and others.

*Question.*—Do you think it wise generally to make use of the Service for the Visitation of the Sick? It would appear likely to bring persons' sins to remembrance, and to lead them to confess them to God. It also brings prominently forward the advisability of persons making their will.

*Answer.*—The question of making the will is a somewhat delicate subject for a clergyman to broach, especially if he be a young man; but advantage may often be taken to speak of the advisability of providing for one's family, and arranging matters in the time of health, so as to give as little anxiety and trouble as possible to survivors. With regard to the Service for the Visitation of the Sick, it is not required to be used by those licensed to preach; but at the same time I believe that the more we enter into the *spirit* of that service, without tying ourselves to the letter of it, the more efficient will our visitation be. I would not omit even the spirit of the opening sentence, though I might not audibly utter the words—"Peace be to this house, and all that dwell in it."



## Pastoral Dealing with Individuals.

BY THE REVEREND WILLIAM WALSHAM HOW, M.A., HONORARY  
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#### XIV.

##### *PASTORAL DEALING WITH INDIVIDUALS.*

THE pastoral dealing with individuals is a subject very closely akin to homiletics, because in truth it is the bringing down into particulars what preaching deals with in generals. And this relation between homiletics and pastoral dealing with souls may be very well illustrated by a quaint simile of Hammond, which, I believe, he borrowed from Quintilian. He is contrasting the two modes of teaching—namely, preaching, and instructing individuals—and he asks this question: Supposing you had a number of narrow-necked vessels to fill with water (and which of us is not a narrow-necked vessel? he asks in a parenthesis), would they be best filled by arranging them in a large room, and throwing ever so many buckets full of water over them, or by pouring a little into the mouth of each? Indeed, the object that these two branches of our work have in view is the same. It is just the pouring in of the water of life into these narrow-necked vessels that we have everywhere to deal with. And let us for one moment



think a little more of the relation between the two branches of our work. Surely the *topics* are the same for both—only treated differently. And yet I am rather disposed to ask why they should be treated differently. I think we lose a good deal of power in our sermons by being too general. I believe that we should do more if we dealt more with the concrete and less with the abstract; if we brought down generals as much as possible into particulars. The majority of uneducated minds are lost when they get among abstractions and general truths. We want to deal with duties and sins as we find them in common life, whether we are preaching to numbers or speaking to individuals. We want to give examples of the various things we speak of. We want to be very minute. The mind has to deal with the smallest things first, before it can deal with the abstract, before it can generalize, before it can make inductions. If we deal only with general truths in our sermons, I am quite sure that very few of the people present will say, "That was meant for me." But if we speak of particulars, and come down to the concrete, and put the case just in the shape in which people encounter it in their every-day life, there will be many of the congregation who will say, "That was meant for me," although it is perfectly plain that the general truth, in reality, covered ten times as many cases as the particular instance. Only it

soared above them. It was on a different plane, and so did not touch them. Whereas, when you get among the particulars of daily life, they know where you are. People live in the concrete, and not in the abstract. Just take an instance—for which I must acknowledge my indebtedness to Canon Furse. Suppose there comes to a congregation a preacher who takes for his subject Jealousy. He descants very eloquently upon the nature of jealousy; he explains its meaning; he tells how in Holy Scripture this sin is denounced; he points out how it differs from envy; and so on. The people will listen, and think it is all very good and all very true, but probably not one will say, "That just fits me." But let another preacher come. He shall not attempt to differentiate jealousy from other sins, or to discourse upon its nature or its heinousness. He shall come at once down to the practical, and he shall say, "See what a sad evil this jealousy is in our daily life. Now, here are two sisters. They have been brought up together; they have had the same education; they have slept in the same room; they have the same religious opinions, the same tastes and pursuits; and yet there is something which has got between them. There is no perfect openness and frankness and freedom between them. There is something wrong, perhaps on one side, perhaps on both. Now, if these girls were to be quite honest with themselves,

and to confess the actual truth, might they not each have to say something like this, 'I am sure they love my sister better than they love me; so I cannot love her'? Well, *that* is jealousy." Ten to one, there would be some girl in the congregation who would say "That was meant for me." Hence you see the close connection between preaching and pastoral dealing with individuals, and that they are really branches of the same great work. So I am not quite sure whether I was right in saying, that though the topics are the same in both, the treatment is different. Possibly the treatment ought not to be very different.

Now, this pastoral dealing with souls is a tremendous work. If preaching is a very hard and very responsible work, how much more is this! In preaching, at any rate, each person is left to apply our words to his own heart; but here we have ourselves to make the application. Gregory the Great calls this dealing with individual souls "*Ars artium*"; and what tact, what wisdom, what patience, what love, what tenderness does it require! We may well say, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

One can hardly avoid, when dealing with this matter, mentioning the subject of private confession. But I am going to put that on one side. I wish this paper to be, not controversial, but practical; and I think its title, "Pastoral Dealing with Individuals,"

will itself almost exclude this difficult question, and suggest rather the line of counsel and direction, to which therefore I will confine myself.

Well, the pastor must be a man whom his parishioners will consult in their difficulties. I don't say *at once*, or *freely*, because people are very shy, and have got very much out of the habit of opening their minds to their pastors. Still, the pastor ought to be a man whom his people will consult. Souls are very weak; souls have sad, sad troubles; souls are perplexed on all sides by all manner of doubts and difficulties; and we *ought* to be able to help them. But we shall not help them unless we ourselves know something of the things in which we try to help them. Unless we ourselves have wrestled with their difficulties, and know how to overcome them, I don't think we shall help much. I know you will forgive me for saying it—Unless we ourselves have taken our own sins, and laid them at the foot of the Cross of Jesus, and have found pardon and mercy there, unless we know surely what the Lord hath done for our own souls, we may have all the will in the world to help, but I do not think we shall do much. But if you are, and are felt to be, a man whom your people can trust—one who has worked out some of the hard problems which perplex them for himself—one who has learnt in his own



experience the things they are longing to know about—then there will not be lack of opportunities. Occasions will be abundant enough in our parishes. I do not say that we shall not have to seek for them, but our pastoral visits will supply us with plenty. And then there is the sick bed, when God seems to open the door for us, and it is our own fault if we fail to enter in. And oh! what thankfulness will overflow the heart, and light up the eye, if we are enabled sometimes to bring joy and peace and comfort to the poor perplexed, struggling, fainting souls, which lie hidden everywhere under the dull, commonplace, uninteresting aspect of the every-day life of men!

Perhaps I could not help in this matter better than by telling in detail something of my own experience, and suggesting a number of topics drawn from the work that I have been permitted to do in parochial missions, when we seem to get in a single week or eight days more than the experience of a year. It may help others, perhaps, if I bring forward some of the difficulties that have been brought before me, and if I try to describe how I should deal with them.

Among these difficulties, first of all I must name SCEPTICISM. It is eating its way into all ranks of society. Not only clever and worldly men, but women, even religious women—those in whom it is



least suspected by their families or their friends,—they come to us with their sad, sad tale of trouble and doubt. Sometimes it is all very vague and misty ; sometimes it centres in some special difficulty, perhaps connected with the Bible, or with science, or with God's dealings with man. Generally it has been caused by reading books suggestive of sceptical difficulties, or by the talk of clever men. I have had more experience of scepticism in the case of women than of men—not because it is more frequent with women than with men (for no doubt it is just the reverse), but because men are more familiar with the subject, and so think less of it, while women have been brought up generally so guardedly that the subject comes to them with more novelty, and so startles and affrights them. Men too often acquiesce in a state of doubt, or, at any rate, in a state of hazy half-belief, which has no grasp upon the truth, and little power over the life. They look on the whole matter as a subject too difficult for them, and so better put on one side. But, alas ! there are some who *welcome* scepticism. They try not to believe, because they are afraid to believe. Their lives are such that they would be very thankful to suppose that there were no God, no judgment to come, no heaven, and no hell. Now let me for one moment pause to consider how to deal with one who comes to you under these circumstances.

We shall not have many such, but we may be brought into contact with one of these too willing doubters. I will tell a story about such a case. In a mission in the north of England there were two mission clergymen who conducted it, the one being a man of more experience and ability than the other. One day a man came to the vestry, and saw the assistant missionary there, and asked if he could see Mr. —. He was told that he was not there at that time; and when the assistant missionary asked if he could not help him, the man said No, he particularly wished to put a few questions to Mr. —, as he had some little difficulties he should like to see if he could explain. Upon being questioned, he acknowledged that he did not believe much in the Bible. The young clergyman then said, "I am not going to talk to you about your difficulties, because I am not clever enough to handle them, and so it would be very wrong of me to do so. But will you allow me to say one little word before you go out of the room? You must forgive me for saying it. Is there nothing in your secret life that has been the source of this unbelief?" The man left the room making some evasive answer. On the next day he came again at the same time. "I am sorry you have come at the same time to-day again," said the younger missionary, "for Mr. — is not here. As I told you yesterday, he is always away at this

time." "But," said the man, "I want to see *you*." "Why, what do you want with me? I told you yesterday I could not answer your questions." "Yes, I know that; but you said something to me about my life just as I was leaving the vestry. I have led a very bad life, and I believe that is just the truth of it." They talked together, and had a long interview, and the inquirer was completely broken down with sorrow and shame at his sin. And that man is now an earnest communicant of the Church. And he told his own clergyman that if that young man had attempted to argue with him he should have been an unbeliever still. The lesson of such a story as that is too plain to need pointing out.

But now, what shall we say of those who doubt and yet shudder at their doubts? What shall we say of those whose faith is shaken, but who long to feel the ground firm under their feet once more? of those over whose souls there hangs a dreadful cloud of uncertainty, but yet who long for the blessed light of heaven to shine through? There is much (oh, how much!) to be said of such. But the first thing I would say is this—they must be dealt with very lovingly, very gently, very sympathisingly. If we begin by denouncing their doubts as wicked temptations of the devil, which can lead to nothing but eternal death (though indeed this may be most true)—if we begin by telling them their doubts are to be looked

upon as deadly sins, to be confessed and repented of—we shall only repel and throw them back upon themselves, and increase the very evil we would remove. We must speak of these things as being the very bitterest and the very hardest trials that men have to bear. We must say, “My poor friend, this is a wound that wants salve to heal it, but let me try to help you, if I can. I know how heavy is your burden, and I would most thankfully try to lighten it.”

I will suggest a few topics which may be useful in dealing with such cases—I mean cases of *unwilling* doubt.

1. Our profound ignorance. We may show the doubter how very very little we know of the mysteries of our own being,—about such things as the nature of life, the union between spirit and matter, and all such questions. Is it then to be supposed that we should find no difficulty in dealing with the nature of God and all the hidden mysteries of the unseen world?

2. We may press upon one thus troubled the conclusions of men of the highest ability and attainments, who have grappled with these difficulties and have come out triumphant. You can point out this and that man of the largest grasp upon great scientific questions, who has a calm undoubting faith.

3. The nature of the subject, which does not admit of mathematical demonstration. It is God's will that



our faith should rest upon something less than mathematical demonstration—that we should be content with moral proofs. Nay, to look for certainty in these things is simply to abolish the province of faith.

4. You have the evidence of the reality of religion in the power of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man. “If any man will do (*θέλει ποιεῖν*) His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” It is that triumph over sin in the soul, that power which can make a man what nothing else can make him, which will enable him to fight against and overcome the deadliest temptations, which can give him victory over self; it is this which is to him who knows it the surest proof of the reality of religion.

5. One may urge the possibility of error in the way of looking at the things about which a doubt is entertained—such things as the relation between science and religion, and so on. We may show that we may be reading either of God’s handwritings wrongly. God teaches us by two books—the book of Nature and the book of Revelation. We have read the latter book wrongly sometimes, and have had to correct our views by the aid of the former; and we must not be staggered if we have to correct some of our interpretations still.

Lastly, we may say, Wait; and then do your best; fight on even in the dark; and remember the story



of the ten lepers. "As they went, they were healed." In the simple path of obedience the blessing came.

It may be useful to mention a few books, which have been found of service. The following have been used with profit:—Drew's "Reasons of Faith," Titcomb's "Cautions for Doubters," Jellett's "Moral Difficulties of the Old Testament." I think that Mr. Heygate's "Why I am a Christian" is especially suited to young men of fair education, such as tradesmen's assistants, clerks, etc., who have been tempted to unbelief by the silly talk of their companions, and who perhaps have no very definite notions of their own. There are some minds for which the somewhat harder reading of Butler's "Analogy," or even of such a book as "The Unseen Universe," may be very useful; but I am quite sure there are a great many more who want to read books not even touching the subject of their doubts. A misty sceptic, who hardly knows whether he believes or not, may be very well recommended to read such a book as Goulburn's "Personal Religion," or the biography of any really holy man. What you want to show such a man to make him believe is often simply the power of religion in the life of man.

Let me give one other illustration. A friend of mine went, during a mission, to address a number of men in a large factory. At the end of the address a workman got up and asked if he might propose a

vote. Permission was readily given, and he then proposed that this gentleman should never come there to speak to them again. Another workman seconded it, and the vote was carried by a large majority. The clergyman afterwards sought out the man who proposed the adverse vote, and found him a professed unbeliever, as he had anticipated. He, however, gladly agreed to a private interview. In this interview the man wished to propound his difficulties, and to ask questions, but the clergyman resolutely refused, and addressed him in words of this sort: "I do not pretend to be able to explain all difficulties, and I shall not try. There are sure to be difficulties to the last. But I want you to believe the power of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man. You don't believe it?" "No, I don't," he answered; "I don't believe anything of the sort." The man was very impatient, and would hardly listen to him at first. However, he told him of men who had learned to conquer their passions, who had become masters of themselves, who had become, what no power in themselves could make them, pure and holy and Christ-like. His lessons were all of the simple instances of the Holy Spirit's power to be found among men in every-day life. And for several interviews he pursued the same line, insisting on the power of religion and the beauty and happiness of a holy life. At last the man was convinced, and entirely

yielded himself to that power in which he had at first professed to disbelieve, and he became a regular communicant.

Another very frequent trouble of souls is the sense of failure in the battle against some besetting sin. The commonest sins are sins of impurity among men, and of temper and tongue among women. People come to one, and say, "I don't get on. I do try, but my sins are just as bad as ever. I resolve to do better. But it is no use." Let me suggest some considerations in dealing with such souls. First of all, there are those of a general nature. What I should say myself to one coming to me under this sense of failure would be something like this: My friend, your first duty is to fight, not to conquer. It may be that you will never quite conquer this sin on this side of the grave, but fight on. Remember, to fight without conquering is a far nobler and grander thing than to conquer without fighting. It is pride that won't bear defeat. You don't like to be humbled. You don't like to find out what a weak, poor creature you are. Then, if you gave up, and never fought any more, where would you be driven to? Can you tell what victories the enemy would gain over you? Then, remember that a sentry placed in a post of great danger, attacked on all sides, and holding his position because his captain has placed him there, is no less good a soldier—perhaps a better—than he

who gallops in the charge of final victory. Again, efforts are always successes in the spiritual life. It is the struggle, the battle, which is the great thing for the soul—not, of necessity, the conquest. Once more, do be content to be always a beginner. I think that that expression we meet with in more than one of the Epistles of St. Ignatius, when he was being carried to the lions at Rome, is very touching. The aged saint on his way to martyrdom, his warfare accomplished, the crown all but in his grasp, exclaims, “Now I am beginning to be a disciple.” We must be content to be beginners; yes, we clergy even.

I often quote to those who are troubled at their frequent failures a short sentence of Faber. I am not sure of the exact words, but they are to this effect: “No soul was ever lost because its fresh beginnings broke down, but thousands of souls have been lost because they would not make fresh beginnings.” And there is another very beautiful sentence from the same writer, in the same chapter. (I am quoting now from a very curious book—“Notes Spiritual and Doctrinal,” a posthumous work of Faber, full of the rankest Romanism and the most startling irreverences, but full also of wonderfully suggestive passages.) It runs in words like these: “When all things are known, perhaps it will be found that many a saintly life has been nothing else than *an entanglement of generous beginnings.*”



Now about dealing with particular sins. Take temper. It is a very common thing to hear people say, "I don't conquer my temper a bit. Try as I may, I am always falling." We may suggest a few very simple rules. (1) Never brood over past misunderstandings. Some temperaments are specially tempted to dwell upon unpleasant scenes, and to go over them again and again. But that which is recalled is not the simple scene as it occurred. They exaggerate it, and imagine what might have been said on either side, and invent bitter and cutting retorts, and so make up a quarrel ten times greater than the original one was, aggravating in their own mind all those feelings of irritation which had been bad enough before. (2) Resolve and force yourself to express sorrow as quickly as you can when you have given way to temper. (3) Determine rather to bite your tongue than to speak when you are angry. (4) Get down on your knees as soon as you can.

Now take impurity. Many sins must be looked full in the face. This sin must be run away from. Flight is the only safety. Flight first. Then occupation—having always something to interest you. Then self-denial, the avoidance of all that is indulgent to the flesh, fasting, and of course instant prayer, as in the former case. I suppose there is nothing so hard for a man to do as, when his whole



soul is trembling from the assault of this sin, to turn and face God. It is almost beyond our power at times, but it is the only safety. Press this upon the tempted—that their only strength is to look straight up to God. In His presence they are safe.

The next topic I would mention is difficulty in prayer. People have terrible difficulties about their prayers. In the London Mission I remember a gentleman coming to the vestry to me to ask my advice. "My life," he said, "has been a great failure. I have failed in many things. I have lost property, relations, friends. I have been a disappointed man. But there was one thing I had hoped for. I had hoped to find happiness in religion. But I am in despair about this. I have prayed, prayed earnestly. But my prayers don't seem to be answered. Is prayer a failure?" He asked this question with intense earnestness and anxiety. Of course I did all I could to encourage him. But thousands and thousands of souls are troubled about prayer. They find that they are cold and dead and apathetic in their prayers. Such souls often long for help. Every individual case requires its own mode of treatment; but, as all clergymen cannot but be familiar with such cases, I will not enter into details. I should like, however, to name a little selection of Faber's hymns, published by Isbister, in which are three hymns upon Distractions,

Dryness, and Sweetness in Prayer. The first two of these deal with the two great difficulties of the subject, and they are so full of beauty, that I really cannot help naming them, and saying how very helpful they will often be found.

And now I come to my last subject—which is, indeed, cognate with the preceding—namely, a general want of love towards God. This is one of the very commonest distresses of the soul: “I cannot love God,” “I don’t love God,” and “I don’t feel God’s love to me.” It is a very sad distress, and one we have continually to deal with. Now, it is always very difficult to deal with the feelings, both because the feelings are so much less under our command than the actions, and also because they are so deceitful and illusory. But people often say, “I can love human beings, but I cannot love God. I can pray for a dying friend or relative; but when I come to pray for myself, I feel so cold and dry.” I had such a case not long ago. A mother came to me, saying she was very much distressed about the state of her soul. She loved her child. She could die for it. But she did not believe that she loved God at all. She did not feel anything of that warmth for God that she did for her child. She feared she was making her child her idol. I said, Of course it was possible to do so; but I pointed out to her that she could not expect to

love God with her *mother's love*. Her mother's love was not given her in order that she might love God with it, but her child; and it could not be expected that love for God should be the same in its manifestation as love for a fellow-creature. Love towards God must be, from the very nature of things, a calmer and more unimpassioned feeling. But it is not on that account less real. And I am sure that it is necessary to point this out to our people, because they believe they ought to feel towards God just as they do towards persons around them—which is really not God's will. It often helps one to think of our Lord's words to St. Peter at the sea of Galilee, when he had made his threefold confession of love. I suppose the Apostle scarcely knew whether he dared to say, "I do love Thee," after what had passed. Yet he left it to Him who knew all things. *He* could read his heart, and see that some love still lingered there. But what does Jesus say? "Feed my lambs," "Feed my sheep": as though He meant, "Do not vex yourself by doubts and questionings as to the depth and warmth of your love, but *act* as if you loved. Show your love by your life." And may it not be that we lose somewhat of joy and peace and freedom by being too *introspective*? I do think it is one of the tendencies of these days. We are always prying into our own hearts' depths. In early

times I think religion had far more of the objective about it. Those were days when they could compose such a hymn as the "Te Deum." In these days our hymns deal with all the sentimental feelings of the heart. We are always looking inwards. We have lost much of that grand triumphant outward and upward look of the soul, when it grasped with such a strength of faith the great eternal verities of the world unseen. Yet I believe that the great revival of worship in our churches now is a great step towards a return to the brightness of belief which marked the Christians of those early times. And I believe that what we should say to many persons, when very sorely troubled about their own hearts, is this: "You are sitting in a dark, cold, ill-furnished, and sordid chamber, and so long as you keep gazing on the dull dirty walls you will not see much to comfort you. Rise and go to the window, and behold God's sunshine streaming broadly and brightly over field and hill. That is more likely to cheer you." Yes, we want the outward look. We want to bid the poor weary soul look up to the smile of Jesus. I could almost fancy He would speak to many such an one, if only they would listen, and say, "O weary, sin-burdened ones, gaze no more upon your own sin-stained hearts. You will find little comfort there. But lift up the eye of faith. Look unto Me, and be ye saved.'"

## Cottage Lectures.

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND WILLIAM PAKENHAM WALSH, D.D.,  
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## XV.

### *COTTAGE LECTURES.*

IT might seem, at first sight, as if the subject chosen for this paper were of too trivial a character to introduce it to notice; but the experience of many will doubtless bear me out when I say that cottage lectures can be made a most effectual aid to pastoral work, and that they furnish a very simple but valuable instrumentality for bringing Divine truth in a familiar and practical way before the people committed to our charge. Next to the services of our Church, and as both supplementary to them and preparatory for them, they have been used with great advantage, not merely in country districts, to which they might seem more specially suited, but even in large towns and cities, where it is more difficult to reach our increasing population. The Church Homiletical Society, which has done so much already towards elevating the tone of the pulpit, may therefore well condescend to notice "Cottage Lectures"—concerning which, however, I regret that the following observations have

little to commend them except the pastoral experience of some thirty years, acquired both in country and city work.

Something may be said further on about the importance of cottage lectures to the younger clergy themselves, as affording an admirable field for the practice of extempore speaking, and thereby giving a facility for expressing their thoughts in language suited to the capacities of their more humble hearers; but it is rather of the cottage lecture as a means of grace, and a portion of the parochial machinery, that we would first speak of it. It occupies a place midway between the conversation of the domiciliary visit and the more systematic teaching of the pulpit; and should therefore combine much of what is familiar and personal in the one case, with something of what is more didactic and general in the other.

A cottage lecture is spoiled, if it be nothing but a *Sunday sermon* preached on a *week-day*, in a *house* instead of in a *church*; and it is worse than spoiled if it be only a roadside *conversation* translated into the *plural* number for the benefit of some twenty people gathered together under some humble roof-tree. There should be in it enough of *dignity* to prevent the hearers from forgetting that it is a *lecture*, and there should be in it enough of *familiarity* to prevent them from supposing that it is just the

same thing as a *sermon*. How to hit the happy mean must be rather a discovery evolved in the practice of every one who undertakes the task, than the mechanical result of observing any stated formula which a lecturer might lay down.

If we endeavour, first of all, to realize the great object which the pastor should have in view—namely, the spiritual edification of those who are gathered to listen to his teaching—and in the next the special circumstances under which they are assembled, as well as the semi-domestic nature of the gathering, it will do more to guide us to a right use of the occasion than any set of formal rules.

Will you allow an Irish clergyman to use the language of paradox with which he is so familiar in his own country, and to premise that a cottage lecture need not necessarily be held in a cottage at all? There are occasions when the village school-room, or the parsonage kitchen, or the farmer's outhouse, may be more convenient; but in a country parish, where a *neat, tidy* cottage can be had, it is much to be preferred. We are not tied down, however, to place or circumstance in this matter. The most successful lecture which my memory recalls was delivered eight hundred feet under ground, to a number of miners, whom at the time it was impossible to reach in any other way; but many

of whom, owing to its continued influence, became afterwards regular attendants at the parish church. Another was held weekly in a city garret, which had to be reached by four flights of rickety stairs. and was initiated amidst the jeers and ribaldry of some who eventually attended it themselves.

There is no reason why the cottage lecture should not have a more extensive sphere of operation than its name denotes. There are, however, a few considerations which, though apparently trifling, are of some importance in selecting your locality, especially in a country parish.

Do not select a house too near the church. Indeed, one of the chief recommendations of a cottage lecture is that it affords an opportunity for worship and instruction to many who are old and feeble, or it may be who live so *far distant* from the church that they cannot always conveniently attend on Sundays, or who from various causes can only attend one service there in the week. And here allow me to observe, that with all my love for cottage lectures, I am satisfied that, in the hands of the clergyman, they will prove to be altogether, or at least very much of, a mistake, if they be not made subsidiary to the regular ministrations of the Church, and a supplement TO, instead of a substitute FOR, them.

In large parishes there will always be a number



of elderly people, as well as invalids and children, who cannot, even if they would, come regularly to the house of God ; and there may be others who make their distance from it an excuse for non-attendance. The location of the cottage lectures should have respect especially to these. You might perhaps have four cottage lectures in four different parts of the parish, spread over the four successive weeks of the month. By taking these constantly in rotation, the whole parish might be brought under the influence of this simple but effective machinery.

Let no one damp your ardour about these lectures by telling you that the people will be so well contented with them that they will cease to care for the more stated services of the Church. This is a subject on which an ounce of experience is worth a ton of theory ; and the experience of many years and of many pastors has put it beyond a doubt that, when properly and judiciously managed, the cottage lecture on the week-day is one of the best and surest methods of securing large and regular attendances at the parish church upon the Sunday ; and—what is of still more importance—of preparing and training the congregation to receive the largest possible amount of profit in the intelligent apprehension of our public services.

Another important consideration, in fixing the

*habitat* of your cottage lecture, is to see that the person in whose house it is to be statedly held is not objectionable to his neighbours. If possible, hold it in the house of a pious and consistent parishioner ; but, in addition to this, take care that he be *popular*, or, at all events, *not unpopular*, with his neighbours. A friend of mine was greatly puzzled to know why all his efforts to make a particular cottage lecture attractive most miserably failed, until at last he discovered that the old curmudgeon in whose house it was held, would never lend any of his agricultural implements to his fellow-tenants, but, on the contrary, displayed his cranky and selfish individuality towards them in all imaginable ways and upon all possible occasions. The venue was changed (as lawyers would say) to a philanthropic old farmer's in the next townland, and then the people had to sit on the beds, through lack of chairs and stools to accommodate them.

A point akin to this, but yet distinct from it, is that you should always sacrifice your own convenience, both as regards time and place, to that of your flock. If walking a mile farther, even up to your ankles in mud, will bring you to a point more central for your people, go in for the mud, and put on stronger boots.

So in like manner as regards the *hour*. The

difference between six o'clock and seven o'clock in the evening may be vital as to your chance of securing a good attendance. The later hour may involve your walking home in the dark, and getting an hour later to your bed; but if you are in earnest, and if moreover you are wise, you will prefer the risk of a stumble on the road to the certainty of being a stumbling-block to your own project. Where there are workmen, and more especially in the country, you may be able to arrange that the time for your meeting should coincide with the latter half of their dinner-hour; and I have known men willingly to give up that half-hour for this purpose. It will be better still if you can induce employers, whether in town or country, to give an additional half-hour to their employés once a week. There are very few who will refuse it, if the matter be judiciously set before them: and it helps to make the lecture popular. In cities and large towns you will generally find the evening the most convenient time; and in any case it is not desirable to prolong the proceedings beyond half an hour. You may sometimes, however, append to them the meeting of a fellowship society, clothing club, or other parochial institution, and thus economize your own time and that of your people.

When your hour and place of meeting are once fixed and known, be punctual in keeping to them. Set the example of punctuality; and if on any

occasion you are obliged to absent yourself, be sure either to provide a substitute, or else give such timely and sufficient notice as will prevent your little flock from gathering together only to meet with disappointment. One of the ablest and most ardent of my clerical acquaintance ruined a well-established cottage lecture in the parish of which he had the temporary charge, by being often late, always flurried, and sometimes absent altogether. It is no hindrance, however, but rather an advantage, to discontinue these lectures upon occasions for a month or two, especially if you are leaving home for a holiday. You can resume them with new vigour, and the very break in the sequence will add freshness to them when your people come together again.

As to the best method of conducting these lectures, a certain amount of latitude must always be allowed, for circumstances will differ widely in different places. When you *can* have singing, it is well. Plain, honest, well-known tunes to good old familiar words will warm the heart, and pitch a keynote for the whole service that is to follow. Thank God, we are beginning to understand better than we did the value of hymnody in our religious services; but there are times when any attempt at singing is ruinous to all composure of mind, both in the pastor and the flock. You ought to be pretty sure, at least, of your leader



before you venture upon giving out a hymn ; and, if possible, make some arrangement with such junior members of the congregation as can sing fairly, to be present and assist. In some places a short meeting for the practice of singing may be usefully held before your little congregation assembles.

But whatever caution you may have to exercise regarding the psalmody, you have the conduct of the prayers in your own hands ; and here let me venture to say that, in my humble judgment, a judicious admixture of the liturgical and extemporaneous is the best suited both to the occasion and circumstances which we are considering. You might either preface your lecture with a selection from the liturgy, and follow it up with a brief prayer constructed out of the topics on which you have been enlarging, or else you might commingle the two styles of prayer, on each occasion, in such a way as to give warmth to what is precomposed, and solidity to what is extemporaneous.

Your cottage lecture may train your people to a more thorough appreciation of our Church services, and a more hearty personal share in them. To this end use especially those parts of the liturgy which are responsive, and encourage your people to join in them. Let your flock, in these smaller gatherings, become accustomed to the sound of their own voices in united prayer and praise, and they will more



readily, because with less timidity, employ them in the combined worship of the great congregation. I have found it very useful to circulate amongst my flock a small book of family prayer, compiled entirely from the Prayer Book, and containing much of the responsive parts. When once the people become accustomed to use it at home, they fall more easily into the way of using the liturgy in more public services.

At the same time, I am not insensible to the value of special prayers, which seize, at special times, on special wants, special circumstances, and special sympathies amongst our people. It will add fire and fervour to these cottage services, if from a heart deeply alive to all your people's wants, and fervently impressed with the power and presence of a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God, you sometimes lead your flock to pour out their hearts, with yours, in those earnest utterances which are dictated by present and peculiar needs. I do not mean that they should take any audible part in these prayers themselves, but that your voice should give utterance to their wants.

And now as to the subjects and the style of your lectures. As a rule, avoid isolated texts. However suited for occasional treatment in the pulpit, they are almost as much out of place in the cottage lecture as soliloquies would be in the pulpit. The best

topic for a cottage lecture is a passage of Scripture, limited in range and extent, yet possessing a unity and completeness in itself. A Psalm (such as xxiii.), a prophecy (such as Isaiah liii.), a type (such as that of the brazen serpent), a parable, a miracle, a striking passage in Old or New Testament history, will arrest attention, and give you full opportunity, not only of explaining the portion in question, but of bringing out the saving truths of the gospel, and applying them, in all their cogency and variety, to the consciences of your hearers.

Here, as well as in the pulpit, we have to deal with immortal souls. Here, as there, we have to discriminate between the impenitent and the believing. Here, as there, we have to follow the human heart through all its labyrinths of escape, and bring it face to face with the awakening, converting, sanctifying Word of God. Let Christ shine forth, therefore, in your cottage lectures, as the Saviour of sinners, as the poor man's Friend, as the Brother born for adversity. Let His grace stand forth in all its distinctness, and His love in all its tenderness. For rough hearts or for smooth, for these uncultured rustics or rough artisans, as well as for the educated dwellers in mansions and in colleges, there is but one thing to meet human want and human misery, and it is the story of the Cross of Christ. Let us get into our own hearts a deep conviction of this

truth ; let us realize it in our own inmost souls, and then go forth like the great Apostle, saying, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

But there are secondary uses of the cottage lecture, and in their place very important ones. Amongst these may be reckoned the opportunity which they afford of correcting common mistakes and misapprehensions, both as regards the theory and practice of religion ; of answering or anticipating objections which your flock are likely to hear against Revelation on the one hand, or against our Church upon the other ; of explaining our public services, and giving them some idea of the nature and progress of missionary work.

Beside this may be noted the seasonable occasions which they present for inculcating personal, domestic, and neighbourly duties, and pressing home in a thousand ways the influence of piety upon the small but not unimportant details of daily life. We might add to this the facilities which they afford for ventilating any plan or project, on which it is desirable to *sound* or to *educate* the opinion of our people before embarking upon it. Thousands of excellent intentions and admirable plans have been frustrated or marred, simply because the people have not understood them before they were put into operation,

or have never had an opportunity of hearing how objections to them may be answered. The cottage lecture often supplies a more suitable place and opportunity for obviating these misapprehensions than the pulpit does. In these and many other ways you will find the cottage lecture a source of strength to yourself, and a real blessing to your people.

Much need not be said as to the *style* which is suitable for such homely gatherings. As already indicated, it should occupy a middle place between the familiarity of conversation and the dignity of the pulpit, neither losing itself in the unceremoniousness of the one, nor allowing itself to be absorbed in the stateliness of the other. If we keep our subject on the line of sacredness, we shall be guarded against the one extreme; if we let it run in the groove of a kindly but sober familiarity, we shall be guarded against the other.

But we must take care that in avoiding stiffness we do not run into vulgarity. In the first place, vulgarity never becomes either the truth, or him who preaches it; and in the next, it is a great mistake to think that the poorer classes relish vulgarity in their superiors. The very contrary is the case; they excessively dislike it, and are keenly alive to the perception of it, especially in matters where religion is concerned.



Vulgarity is not required in order to make any sacred subject intelligible, or plain, or attractive. Even when we put off the silken robes of refined education, it is neither seemly nor decent that we should go amongst our people in rags. There are homely and substantial dresses to be supplied even from an academic wardrobe, and he who knows how to array himself with taste and becomingness in these can appear with advantage to himself, and—what is of infinitely more importance—with advantage to the truth, which it is his privilege, and ought to be his aim and glory, to commend to others.

Let me add a few cautions.

Let us not think, because our audiences at these lectures are of the humbler class, that therefore we need no preparation. Let us not give here, or elsewhere, unto God, of that which costs us nothing. Let us not be content to talk without having something really to say. The gift of *tongue* is a very different thing from the gift of tongues, though some act as if the former were to supply in this age the absence of the gift which distinguished the Pentecostal Church. My former Diocesan, Archbishop Whately, used to say that “some men thought they had a great command of language, when in reality it was language that had a great command of them.” The more thoroughly we prepare, the more thoroughly we shall be understood, and the



more likely we shall be, with God's help, to reap a blessing.

Again, do not make the cottage lecture a substitute for house-to-house visitation. If you do not wish the people to put it in place of the Sunday service, do not set them the suggestively bad example of putting it in the place of your pastoral communications with them in their individual homes. You may make it a most effective aid to this part of your work, whilst at the same time you can make this latter the secret power that will crowd your cottage lectures, and eventually your parish churches. When you miss the absentees from the cottage lecture it will give you an additional reason for making a call at their houses. When you call at their houses, common courtesy on their part can scarcely refrain from returning the compliment by going to your lecture.

Evans, in his "Bishopric of Souls," has well observed that "to domestic visitation the lecture is a good *second*;" but he adds, "The lecture will be essentially unprofitable to you, and unblessed, without the domestic visitation." And then he pointedly inquires, "Were an enemy scattered over a country, two or three in every house, would you try to expel him by a general and distant cannonade from one large fixed battery, rather than go up and drive him out by detail from every hold?" The

illustration needs no explanation to make it apply to my subject, and would only suffer by any attempt at it.

This military phraseology reminds me of another advantage attaching to services such as we have been now considering. The cottage lecture is an "*undress parade*," and for that very reason is more likely to be attended in the first instance by those who either dislike the preparation for a more regular service, or are unprovided with what they consider suitable uniform and equipments.

Those who know anything of parochial work know how frequently the want of suitable clothing is alleged, sometimes as a reason, but still more frequently as an excuse, for not attending divine service on the Lord's day. The particular means of grace which we have been considering has this great advantage, that it leaves no colour for such excuses, whether true or feigned. The peasant or the artizan may come in from his daily avocation, perhaps during part of his dinner-hour, in his working suit, and take his part without shame or offence at this homely gathering for divine worship; and there, through the teaching of God's good Spirit, may learn such lessons, and come under such gracious influences, as shall make him less concerned about the raiment in which he may appear at the house of God on earth, and more concerned about that robe of

righteousness which admits to the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven.

Let me, in conclusion, say a few words with regard to the value of these cottage lectures as a training-school for the younger clergy. The Dean of Chester, in a lecture delivered before the Church Homiletical Society, took an admirable and judicious view of the relative merits of written and extemporaneous sermons ; but he did not hesitate to tell the younger men that they should take pains to acquire the power of extemporaneous address ; and that they ought to persevere in it until they succeeded. Could there be a more suitable or natural school for such endeavours than that supplied by the cottage lecture ? There, amidst your own people, beloved and known—with their wants, and trials, and interests brought to the very door of your heart—with no dread of hostile criticism to alarm or repel you—with a ready sympathy in most cases waiting to meet your endeavours for their good,—surely there is enough to unlock the most timid lips, and to loose the most stammering tongues. I remember a Fellow of our Dublin University, who went out early to a parish living, and whose first attempts at public speaking were an utter failure. He became in course of time one of the most finished and eloquent of our clerical orators, both on platform and in pulpit ; and that man confessed to me that he learned the art in

his own barn, where he held a weekly service for his poorer parishioners, and tried, notwithstanding his nervousness and hesitancy, to speak to them the blessed truths of which his own heart was full.

But there is still another way, and a most important one, in which the cottage lecture may materially influence the pulpit and the whole of your ministerial efficiency. From the very nature of the case, the style of your cottage lectures will necessarily be rather of the *expository* than of the *topical* character. Now, I have long felt that the great want of our pulpit in the present day is the want of expository teaching. There are times and occasions when topical preaching is most telling and appropriate; but as a rule the other mode seems to me the one that is most required, and most likely to have permanent results. Just consider how many people there are in all our congregations who have no opportunity of becoming systematically acquainted with Bible teaching, except through our ministrations,—how many there are who do not and cannot read the Scriptures for themselves,—how many there are who never see a commentary or hear an explanation of Divine truth, save what they hear from the pulpit. Is it not of the utmost importance to widen their acquaintance with the Word of God—to seize upon the few opportunities which they possess in order to



give them some fuller and deeper knowledge of the Scriptures themselves?

To some the expository style of preaching may appear to be such a simple thing as to need no previous training; but to my mind, while it is the easiest kind of preaching in the world to do badly, it is the most difficult kind to do well. For exposition of the Scripture, if it is to deserve the name, must be the result of such a knowledge of the Scriptures as is neither superficial nor general, but patient, deep, minute, and practical,—a catching up and incorporation into our hearts, not merely of its idioms and its style, but of its light and love,—a distinct apprehension, not only of its arguments and conclusions, but of its bearings upon the hopes and fears and struggles and aspirations of the human heart. Unless a man masters the Holy Scripture in this way—intellectually, spiritually, practically—he cannot be in any true sense an expositor of it. The more he knows of its grammar, diction, style, truth, spirit, purpose, the more fully will he be qualified to expound to others what he has thus thoughtfully, painfully, prayerfully, endeavoured to make his own.

It is in this way especially that the cottage lecture may influence the pulpit. The growing familiarity with this expository style of preaching in the one case, and the due preparation for it, will gradually



give tone and colour to our more public teaching in the other ; and the hearers will begin to feel the vigour of a fresh life, in proportion as they are brought more directly into contact with the living oracles of God. *They* will come to regard the Bible, not as they too often do, as if it belonged to the history of another world ; but as a book adapted to all the phases and circumstances of their own changeful and eventful lives. *You* will add unconsciously to the great evidences for Christianity, by feeling, and causing others to feel, the many-sidedness and unity of the Word of God.

You will begin to realize, in the study of Divine things, what the illustrious Newton realized in the pursuit of earthly science—the vastness of that ocean of truth which lies undiscovered before you. It is well to gather up and exhibit the solitary gems that lie scattered up and down in individual texts, upon the shores and inlets of Holy Scripture ; but it is better, grander, and more profitable, to weigh our anchors, unfurl our sails, and launch out into the great ocean of Revelation, visiting in turn its mighty continents and remoter territories, and bringing back with us from every coast we visit, whether in its older or newer hemisphere, the wealth, the produce, and the marvels which were meant to enrich and satisfy our souls.

For all these reasons, then, I commend the cottage

lecture to your attention and your use. You will find it to be an important adjunct to your parochial machinery ; a means of reaching some whom otherwise you might never reach ; a help and preparation for the better appreciation of our Church's services ; a training-school for the cultivation of your own mental and spiritual powers ; and, best of all, a means of grace and blessing to your people and the Church of God.



## How to Reach Working Men.

BY THE REVEREND THOMAS MOSSE MACDONALD M.A.,  
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## XVI.

### *HOW TO REACH WORKING MEN.*

**M**Y subject, in short, is "How to reach working men." More fully stated it is "The condition of working men and the methods by which we may best hope to reach them for the ends of parish work."

This problem has doubtless occupied the attention of most clergymen. It cannot but force itself on the anxious thoughts of every earnest minister of Christ in a large population. Upon its practical solution, much more than upon Acts of Parliament or decisions of courts of law, depend the safety and growth of the true religion established among us. The security for the permanence of religion in the land is that it be established in the hearts and homes of the people, and the secret of this is but to a small extent in the hands of lawyers and legislators; but to a degree beyond all calculation it is in the hands of the parochial clergy.

If we can but win the confidence and attachment of our working men, and make them to become

witnesses to the efficiency of the National Church, we shall have secured the best society for Church Defence. The enemies of the Church have found their most effective weapons in the neglects and abuses that have existed within her pale. To reform these abuses, and to be wisely and faithfully active in our parishes, will be our ample security against their worst attempts.

My desire is to offer such counsels and considerations to my younger brethren, as, looking back upon my own early ministry, I believe would have been helpful to me in my efforts among working men, who were a chief object of my labours in a large town parish for nearly twenty years.

To be prepared for such work, a young clergyman should realize the position in which he stands as a minister of the National Church with parochial charge : he should have a clear view of the great end of parish work among working men ; he should be acquainted with the condition and surroundings of working men generally, and with the influences, whether for good or evil, under which they live ; he ought to know the state of those in his own parish minutely ; and lastly, he should be acquainted with the methods which experience seems to approve as the wisest and best for his work.

What I have to say will follow this order :—

I. His own position as a minister of the National Church, with parochial charge.

The Church, as national, accepts the responsibility of providing for the spiritual wants of the community. The parochial system is her provision for the discharge of this responsibility, which, thus distributed, is accepted for his own parish by every incumbent and curate, as the condition upon which he holds his position. Every parish clergyman is thus solemnly pledged to the spiritual care of all within the bounds of his parish, as far as he can find opportunity.

There are doubtless many examples of earnest work by which congregations are gathered and churches filled. But a congregational success is not the success of a parochial clergyman. He may see the seats of his church filled with respectable people, attracted—it may be—from other parishes by his eloquence or his ritual ; but, in view of the obligation he has accepted as the minister of Christ to a parish, he can scarcely look upon this fruit of his labour with complacency, if whole classes of his own flock are conspicuous by their absence.

First of all, then, I would have it enforced upon the conscience of every young clergyman, that whatever claims upon his time or attention may present themselves, the claim of his parish, and of all who live in it, upon his earnest pastoral care is always of the first obligation.

II. To direct and sustain our interest in work among working men, we must have a clear conception

of *the end* for which we seek to reach them. That end is simply *to promote their true welfare*. Our aim is to help them by all possible means to become wise and good and happy men, such as may be always welcome in their homes, and beloved, and a blessing to their neighbours.

And as we are assured that this object, for any class or any individual, can never be secured by any order of means in which religion, the religion of Christ, does not hold a foremost place, our supreme aim in all our plans is to bring men under the influence of religion. Many other and subordinate purposes there are, which are valuable in their own place, and which in their own place we are glad to promote. But educational and social reforms can never reach the root of man's well-being. That root lies deeper than his intellectual and social nature. Our Maker has made the spiritual faculties supreme in the human constitution, and till the whole man be brought under their control, and they themselves quickened into life, and guided by the power and teaching of the gospel, the foundation of man's real welfare in any relation is still unlaid.

The object, then, for which we seek to reach working men is no object of mere human philanthropy. Our mission is divine ; and as the representatives in our parishes of Him who "went about doing good," our lives are consecrated to promote to the utmost

of our power *the* good which He lived and died to do,—“to seek and to save that which is lost.”

III. An accurate acquaintance with the state of his own parish is as necessary to a clergyman, to stimulate and direct his zeal, as a careful diagnosis of the condition of his patient is necessary to a wise physician; but the physician must have walked the hospitals, and have acquired a careful acquaintance with the conditions of health and disease in general, before he is qualified to examine his patient.

As a young clergyman attempting work among working men, I should have been thankful for some general knowledge of their condition, and of the influences, for good or evil, under which they live. Such knowledge would have been most serviceable, as directing my inquiries concerning those in my own charge. I will state, then, as shortly as I can, such facts as give a fair indication of the general condition of working men, and the forces which are forming their habits in respect of morality and religion.

It cannot be denied that causes fitted to promote the happiness and contentment of the people have been in operation for the last forty years. Discontent and disaffection to the institutions of the country, both in Church and State, were then wide-spread. The occasions of these have been removed by a wise course of legislation. Great sanitary reforms have been effected. The trade of the country since the



year 1840 has been increased more than sixfold. Wages have risen 50 to 80 per cent., while the hours of work have been reduced by ten or twelve per week, and the price of bread has scarcely increased.

The Church, too, during this period, has made astonishing exertions and sacrifices to adapt herself to the spiritual requirements of the nation. More than three thousand churches have been built since 1840. Parishes have been subdivided so as to make one new parish for every three existing in the beginning of the century. The parochial clergy had increased from 11,006 in 1841 to 19,043 in 1871. The education of the country has made vast progress, so that there are now five children in really efficient schools for every one who was at school (and the schools were then unworthy of the name) in 1818. The population meanwhile has only about doubled.

The Church's influence upon working men has greatly increased during recent years through the labours of "the working clergy," a class which exists in much larger proportion than in any former period of our history. Among the teeming populations of our great towns they are often a hidden class. Their labours and sacrifices are not in public view. Un-associated with disturbing controversies and crotchets, content for the most part to work on the old lines of the Church of England, and faithful to their parochial

trust, their patient, loving toil has done and is doing more than any other agency to cement the union between the Church and the nation.

Many institutions besides have come into existence during this period—as Mechanics' Institutes, Mutual Aid Societies, Temperance Societies, Bands of Hope, etc.—whose aim is to improve the condition of the people.

The effect of all these causes is a greatly improved tone in respect of religion and the Church throughout the community. This has been most strikingly manifest in parliamentary and school-board elections. A notable example was seen as the result of the ballot in 1870 in Nottingham, a town which had a most unenviable notoriety but a generation before. Two clergymen were elected to serve on the first school-board in that town, and one of the two was at the head of the poll.

And it is certain that the Church's effort to reach working men is now made under more hopeful circumstances than at any former time. Yet all that has been done so far is but preliminary work. None will pretend that as a class the working men of the land are brought under the Church's influence.

There are other facts of their condition, and other forces in operation among them, of which we must take account, if we would understand their position, and what our work among them must be.

What then are the facts respecting *Religious Observance, Crime, Drink, and the Influence of the Cheap Press?*

1. *Where are our working men on Sunday?* How few of us can reply, "A fair proportion of them in my parish are at church or some other place of worship." The religious census of 1851 disclosed the startling fact that out of a population of nearly eighteen millions in England and Wales, more than five millions were absentees from public worship of any kind. Since that year there has, no doubt, been a great improvement. But seven millions have meanwhile been added to the population, and I fear the increasing attendance of working men at public worship has not more than kept pace with the increase of population. I doubt if it has done so much. A private census would sometimes make a sad revelation. I know of one district in which, out of 1058 adults, 615 disowned all profession of religion; and another where, of 140 inhabiting a large court, only two professed to go to a place of worship, and one of the two was a Mormon. And these, I fear, are cases representative of very many.

But if working men are away from our churches, how is this to be accounted for, and under what influences are they as regards religion?

For multitudes of them the only account to be given is that they are neglecters *by habit*. They

have almost all been scholars in Sunday schools; as scholars they went to church, and only as scholars, for their parents and elder brothers were not there. When they outgrew the school, the only link that held them to the Church was broken. Thenceforward free from the restraints of school and from the teacher's influence, their negligent habit began: they wandered in company with others of their own class, and became easy victims of Sunday idleness and the vices that attend it. Every week becoming more independent, and with more money to spend, they soon found their way to the public-house, or to worse places. Some became gross, and sank rapidly lower, but (with rare exceptions) all became indifferent to religion. Thus, without any set intention, a habit has its beginning, which, before manhood is reached, becomes inveterate—the habit of disregard to the Sunday, and to all the observances of religion.

But it cannot be denied that a very large class of working men have come to regard it an unmanly thing to be religious. Their own account of it, as I have often had it from themselves, is that they do not care to be like the Christians with whom they have to do, upon whose character the only apparent effect of their religion is to add its pretence to conduct which is at least as selfish and regardless of the feelings and rights of others, as that of their



neighbours who make no profession. It is, of course, unfair that Christianity should be judged, not by its principles, but by the conduct of those that profess them. But however unfair, it is and will continue to be most common; for men's convictions on the subject of religion are not commonly the result of unprejudiced and sincere inquiry. They are derived very much from the moral atmosphere in which they live, and the impressions produced on them by the conduct of religious or irreligious people. It is most true that the only Bible read by the multitude is the conduct of professing Christians; and in the case of those working men who see no worthier representatives of Religion than are sometimes found in their employers, it is easy to see how, in the atmosphere of the public-house, or of the workshop or the club, surface-doubt passes into unbelief, and dislike of so-called Christians into contempt and hatred of their religion. The popular and practical infidelity of England has commonly no other or deeper root than this.

2. Another and an important index of forces in operation among the working classes is found in *the records of Crime*, which are published by authority. It is commonly stated—to use the words of a useful and generally accurate publication\*—that “the crime of the country is happily on the decrease,” and it is

\* Whitaker's Almanack, 1877.



added, "it will no doubt be further diminished as the lower classes become better educated." I am sorry to say the alleged fact is not true, nor is the confidence thus expressed warranted by experience.

In proof of the decrease of crime, the returns are quoted of what is called the 'indictable crime' of the country, *i.e.*, of the offences tried by jury at the Assize Courts and Quarter Sessions; but no account is taken of the police reports, *i.e.*, of offences dealt with summarily by the magistrates. These were not published before 1857. But it is obvious that no correct estimate of the condition of the country respecting crime can be formed except by a combination of both classes of returns. The number of "indictable offences" does not annually exceed 20,000. Those of the police reports are more than twenty times this number. In an inquiry therefore into the influences at work in the general population, the police reports are a much more important guide. Nor must the offences of the police reports be thought of as only trivial, unless licentious and violent outrages, and the kicking of wives and neighbours, and robbery, be trifling matters.

So far from a diminished tale of crime in the country, there is a great, even an alarming increase as is shown by the increase of offences in the police returns from 266,019 in 1860 to the prodigious number

of 433,868 in 1874. I am sorry to say Lancashire must own to a large proportion of the increase.

The degree in which crimes of violence have multiplied in late years has a sad significance. For example, in 1874, as compared with 1860, there was an increase of 36 per cent. in "common assaults," and of no less than 128 per cent. in "breaches of the peace."

3. Offences thus multiplied and thus increasing represent evil agencies at work on a vast scale, and with which we have to do battle. But there is ONE MONSTER EVIL familiar to us all, against which, more than all the rest, our weapons must be directed with our utmost skill and perseverance. There is no need to multiply testimonies to that which has been so long and so loudly proclaimed in the ears of all : namely, that (to quote the words of one of the judges\*) "nineteen-twentieths of the acts of violence in the country originate in the public-house ;" or (as another of the judges † declares) that "DRINK is at the bottom of nearly all the evils that are committed in the land."

But not only is excess in drinking the besetting sin of the lower classes in England, and the chief source of crime ; there is also abundant evidence that it has frightfully increased in late years. It is an alarming fact that in the police returns an increase of 110 per cent. occurred in the number of persons

\* Mr. Justice Keating.

† Mr. Justice Denman.

convicted of drunkenness and disorder in 1874, as compared with 1860.

The statements of the Registrar-General tell a similar tale. The deaths *directly* resulting from alcohol (as by delirium tremens, etc.) increased between 1870 and 1874 in the proportion of from twenty-nine to forty-five, and of men thus destroyed nearly a fourth were under thirty-five years of age. But reports can only in a small degree represent the results of drink in this country. The facts that come before the public through the police, etc., do but slightly indicate the innumerable and unspeakable woes, of which no official account is taken, and which no tables of figures can adequately represent.

How is this frightful increase of drunkenness and its attendant miseries to be accounted for? Most easily. The cause is found in the temptations of public-houses and beer-shops so shamelessly multiplied in our midst. Strange it may seem, but it is true, that the proportion of places licensed for the sale of strong drink has *nearly doubled* in the last forty years. In 1829 one person in 270 was licensed to sell intoxicating liquors. In 1869 there was one in 140, or one house of drink established for every thirty houses in the country.

Thus, while in the last generation an unparalleled advance has been made in the country's material wealth, and greatly enlarged means of improvement

and happiness have been given to the people, side by side with this advance a vile machinery has grown up, which, like Pharaoh's ill-favoured kine, devours the means of improvement, and destroys the happiness and character and hopes of myriads of working men and their families.

4. *And what of the Literature which is in the hands of the working classes?* It is common to hear men speak triumphantly of the spread of education. And this, together with the increased leisure of the people, would be occasion for rejoicing, if we could be sure that it would not be abused. But the possession of power does not imply its right use, as so many seem to assume. The result of the extended power to read has been a vast and increasing demand for books and periodicals, and to meet it there is a correspondingly enormous supply of cheap literature. A considerable and an increasing portion of this is no doubt wholesome and good. But those who are devising means to benefit the working class ought to know that an immense proportion of it—which is also vastly on the increase—is infidel and vicious in the last degree.

The so-called *National Reformer* is a leading organ of what is called "secular literature," the literature which combines atheism and infidelity of every sort in a bitter antagonism to Christ and His



religion. The recent boast of this journal is that the circulation of the literature which it represents has had *a threefold increase during the last two years.*

The Bishop of Peterborough, in a recent speech, said: "I have lately seen publications, cheaply got up, cleverly written, and largely circulated among the working classes of this country, which for virulence of abuse and rancour of hate against not merely the doctrines of Christianity, but the Person of its blessed Founder, and which for foulness of denunciation, are unparalleled in literature, and were not exceeded by the foulest and most horrible utterances of the last century, even amid the horrors of the French Revolution."

It is a fact of no small significance that the Sunday newspapers have reached a circulation of nearly thirty millions annually.

There is one department of this literature which demands our special vigilance. We are accustomed to think of our work among the young as having most promise of success. So think the Secularists. A leading aim of the organization of their party, upon which they congratulate themselves that it has recently made rapid growth, is to flood the land with a deluge of *boy-literature* of this class. I am assured by a gentleman in this city, who has ample opportunities of knowing, that new serials



are continually appearing, of which the special feature is a glowing description of daring robberies and acts of piracy and plunder, the perpetrators of which are celebrated as heroes.

The *Saturday Review*, in an article entitled "Penny Lessons in Depravity," having given the story of a robbery by a boy, which was the result of his reading vile literature, states that "tales of this kind are bought up in these 'Penny Dreadfuls' by thousands and hundreds of thousands every week, and have again and again been found in possession of boy-burglars, to whose worst tastes they are strikingly adapted, ringing the changes for the most part on deeds of violence or hideous obscenity."

It is not wonderful that the number of "boy-burglars," offenders under sixteen years of age, convicted of robbery, increased from 6,048 in 1860 to 10,048 in 1873.

The amiable philosophy which imagines that the increase of secular education can be only a blessing will perhaps modify its conclusion, and descry dangers ahead, if its eyes can be open to the vision of myriads of our population, especially of the young, with their newly acquired power to read, devouring the blasphemous and filthy trash of these publications.

Those who are confident of wonders of moral improvement to follow upon educational and social

reforms apart from religion, can maintain their astonishing confidence only by ignoring the two great considerations which I have thus far endeavoured to make plain:—(1) That there are hostile forces—gigantic, active, and widespread—which are eagerly assuming the direction of whatever power and opportunity may arise from the improved education and the increased wages, leisure, and political influence of the people; and (2) that there are facts which prove beyond dispute that the educational and social reforms of the last generation have not prevailed to abate the evils which afflict our country and hinder the progress of religion.

But if others are blind to them, the existence of these forces and the significance of these facts must be taken account of by Christian men, and most of all by the clergy. In whose parishes are the irreligious and the criminal and the drunkard and the licentious to be found? There is not one of them but is the object of responsibility to some parish clergyman, who is bound to have a pastor's care for him; and I suppose that every one of us—not perhaps without some sense of shame for past neglect—must own that a share of the burden belongs to him.

I have always been thankful to the excellent archbishop by whom I was ordained, that he put

into my hands a form of what he called a "Speculum Parochiale," with directions how to fill it up. A young clergyman ought to make it among his first duties to furnish himself with definite information respecting every house, and (especially in relation to our subject) respecting every man and every boy in his parish. He ought to know where they are on Sunday; how they spend their leisure time; what books and periodicals and newspapers they read; what company they keep; and what is the character and place of meeting of any society or club of which they are members.

Such inquiries faithfully pursued could not but result in giving him a deeper sense of the importance, the difficulty, and the intense interest of the work with which he is charged.

Would that each of us who have parochial charge might awake to the greatness of our obligations, and of the results which are depending on our fidelity or our neglect! Would that each might resolve henceforth, by God's grace, to do his utmost to seek out and rescue and guard every member of his flock who is in danger! This would be to raise an effectual breakwater against the rising tides of evil, and give a mighty impulse to the working of that parochial machinery which, in the hands of wise and loving men, I believe to be adapted beyond all others to bless the homes and people of England.

IV. One other and important element of the problem which each clergyman has to solve for his own parish will be found in *the methods which experience seems to approve as the wisest and best for parish work among working men.*

And first of all we must fix it well in our minds that as our mission is divine, so the main instrument of our work is not left to our own wisdom to invent, nor is it a human power which makes it effectual. If men will presumptuously undertake to improve themselves or their fellows upon plans which leave out all recognition of their Maker and His great plan, they ought not, and they never can, succeed.

If we are true men as Christ's ambassadors, our confidence can never be in any device for human well-being of which God's method is not acknowledged as the essential feature. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is" (even as when first proclaimed) "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

Our question is, therefore, *how to reach working men, so that they may come under the power of the gospel.* The methods by which they may be reached are of two classes: *Direct* and *Indirect*. *Direct*, by the preaching of the gospel, as by St. Paul for three years at Ephesus, "publicly and from house to house." *Indirect*, by the employment of secondary means.

I. *Direct methods.* Not much detail is needed on a subject so familiar. Yet when it is also a subject of so great importance, it must be remembered that the commonplaces are of greatest necessity. There is one consideration which, because it is so obvious, and notwithstanding its immense importance, experience shows is apt to be left out, not only when we speak to others, but even when in quiet and thoughtful hours we speak to ourselves.

(I.) May I use the liberty of an elder brother, and point out to every worker for Christ that in seeking the spiritual profit of others *the great instrument of his work is himself*, and that his first care must be to be himself fitted for it? "He that *winneth* souls is wise." But how more than unfortunate is the *manner* which sometimes is seen in a clergyman, which gives the impression of a heart which knows no sympathy, and which is fitted to repel rather than to win the confidence and love of his people! Such an one ought seriously to inquire whether or not this cold and repellent aspect can be got rid of; and if not, whether he can be in his right place in an office the great end of which is to win the influence of love upon others.

But manner is the dress which the soul puts on; and the true secret of a wise and loving manner is *within*. Knowledge is important, and many a gift beside; but in the work of Christ it is first of all,



not knowledge, but *character*, which is power; for it is not by what we know, or what we say, or do, but *by what we are*, that we exert our chief influence on other minds.

The working people, who know little of artificial life, are quick to discern the difference between the professional or patronizing call of the mere official, and the visit of one whose presence is a ray of sunshine,—the man or woman whom a true instinct teaches them is the representative of Him who is the Friend for all occasions. How often our Master, in representing how His followers would influence the world, speaks not of the instruments in their hands, but *of themselves* as specially qualified by His grace for their work! “*Ye are the salt of the earth;*” “*Ye are the light of the world.*” Of Himself, the great Magnet, He said, “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.” But this work of His is also our work—to *draw men* to Christ. And how? The magnetised bar of iron becomes itself a power of attraction, but its virtue is not self-derived. He that will transmit the electric current to another must be himself in communication with its source. If we would have any true success, we must see that we are not *in Christ’s work without Christ*; of which there is no small danger.

A recent writer calls this power of influencing others “the enthusiasm of humanity.” St. Paul

points to its true and only source when he says, "The love of Christ constraineth us."

(2.) "*If you want to get to a man's heart, you must go to his house.*" Distance, in the case of those who ought from their relation to each other to be friends, produces not only indifference, but alienation and dislike.

We must show our people that we care for them by being at some pains to know them and their families at home. "A house-going parson makes a church-going people."

(3.) The clergyman, too, who is known in his parish as *the children's friend*, has already got into the citadel. Who has not learned that the shortest and surest road to a parent's heart is by caring for his child?

(4.) And *seasons of personal and family sorrow* are ever occurring, which give golden opportunities of influence. Men's hearts are then open, as at no other times, to the power of kindness, and responsive to the claims as well as the consolations of religion. I have had great reason to be thankful for the counsel I received from a venerable clergyman when I was going to my first parish, diligently to watch and lovingly to use occasions of sorrow among my people.

(5.) Special adaptation of services to the circumstances and habits of a large class of our people is

a great necessity. All experience proves that they will not come at once to our churches. They need to be educated up to the Church and the Prayer Book through services especially suited to their habits, and brought to the level of their tastes and understanding. Open-air addresses and the use of the shortened service, with some extempore prayer, much singing, and suitable addresses in schoolrooms and cottages, are very valuable. But the Church must do more than this, for there are very many who will not be induced to come even to such services. There are many factories, warehouses, and workshops in which we can obtain permission (as the experience of parochial missions proves) for short services, in which employers and employed will give a cordial welcome to the clergyman who shows himself willing for their sakes to give up his ease, if by any means he may win their hearts for the Master whom he serves.

In different parishes, methods devised by true and earnest men will differ. A faithful and loving clergyman whom I know in Derbyshire is in the habit of descending regularly into a coal-pit in his parish, to hold a service with the miners at a convenient time. His welcome is made more cordial by his daughter's accompanying him to lead the singing, delighting as she does to help her father's effort to secure that in his parish, in the name of Jesus, not only things *in*

the earth, but also things *under* the earth, may bow the knee.

Parochial missions have proved valuable helps among working men. But their value seems to be in the *permanent* work which they originate, or to which they give new life. I know parishes, the whole aspect of which has become permanently changed by work quickened into new earnestness by parochial missions. Alas! I know others where there has been no earnest care after the mission to reap its results, and where the last state of the parish and the clergy is in danger of being worse than the first.

(6.) A capital defect of our parochial organization, and the failure of our work where it needs to be most efficient, is among our male population of the years from fourteen and upwards. It is just in these years that our teaching and influence are most needed, for their character is then taking its final mould, and the influences are most powerful and active by which so commonly their future is determined for evil. If the Church fails to get hold of them for Christ in these years, they will quickly have passed out of our reach, and will be found in the tap-room, the theatre, and in still worse places. Classes on Sundays, and on week-evenings, in separate class-rooms, conducted by qualified and loving teachers, who will also encourage and direct their reading, are one of the most urgent demands of our work. Our cultivated and Christian



laymen are under obligation to come to our help in this matter to an extent of which they as yet seem to have no conception. Surely, when the necessity of the work, and the claims of the Master whose work it is, and who gave His own life to promote it, come to be understood, the Church's offering will not consist (as it too often does) of the refuse leisure and interest which remain after the world's demands have been met. Ours must be the task so to instruct and influence our men of position, ability, and culture, that they will account it an object worthier of their interest to help us to rescue and to guard the growing men of the next generation, than any employment of their leisure time which has only present indulgence for its aim. That they have been thus far so unhelpful in our work, perhaps is due to the lack of the magnet-force,—the enthusiasm of humanity,—the “constraining love of Christ” in ourselves.

2. *Indirect methods.* But when all has been done that direct efforts can do to bring the men of our parishes under the influence of religion, all experience tells us that large classes will still remain beyond the range of our influence. The life of neglect and self-indulgence into which multitudes have fallen, and the temptations which surround them, most skilfully fitted to their degraded habits and tastes, place them beyond the reach of means which only appeal to the sense of religion. In too many of our brethren, con-



science has become torpid, and present gratification has become the chief motive of their existence.

One of our foremost statesmen said, some years ago, that the duty of those who govern is "to make it easy for people to do right, and difficult for them to do wrong."\* There is surely no more terrible difficulty in the way of right-doing to the working men of England, than is found in the overwhelming numbers of places licensed for the sale of strong drink. Yet no Government, so far, appears to have felt any obligation to diminish their number or influence. While so enormous a part of our revenue is derived from the drinking habits of the working classes, it seems as if the conscience of our legislators cannot awake to the national danger and dishonour of a prosperity which is based on the degradation and ruin of the people. The appeal of the Grand Jury at the Central Criminal Court of London in 1862 ought to be made to ring in the ears of Parliament, until they be constrained to seek some better way of meeting the nation's expenditure than the maintenance of that which all acknowledge to be the disgrace and curse of England. "The Grand Jury," they said, "cannot withhold from the Court the amazement and horror which they have felt during these investigations, at *the systematic countenance of,*

\* See Speech of Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, at Buckley, January 4th, 1864.

*and encouragement to, vicious habits, by the facilities afforded by the numberless places of resort for drinking and profligacy, thereby providing nurseries for crime and destitution; and they earnestly hope that some effectual steps may be taken, either by the withholding of licences, or curtailing the hours for the sale of intoxicating liquors, to grapple with a system of demoralization, as antagonistic to the interests of religion, and as injurious to the social well-being of all classes of the community, as it is degrading to us as an enlightened nation."*

The frightful results upon the condition of the people of the principle of *free-trade in drink*, adopted for years by the Liverpool magistrates, ought to be urged on the consideration of all who have the responsibility of licensing drink-houses.

But the clergy must not wait till governments and magistrates awake to their responsibilities. Nor must we regard even the worst of our parishioners as hopeless or beyond our reach. The question for each of us must ever be, What means yet remain by which I may endeavour to reach the men of my parish who have not yet come under the influence of religion?

It is now felt, I think, pretty generally, that if we are to save our working men from the public-house and its degrading associations, something better must be found for them—something which shall not only

keep them from the evils of drink and drinking companions, but shall provide wholesome and elevating employment and recreation for their leisure time. I have the utmost confidence in pleading that the clergy, in this "something better than the public-house," may find effective, though secondary and indirect means of promoting religion among the working men of our parishes. I have indeed known good people who would frown upon a clergyman's becoming identified with any methods of social improvement or recreation for the people, as a descent from his position, and a secularising of his office. Such an objection is now, I trust, out of date. It is pretty well understood that the spirit and purpose of the worker give sacredness to common things, even as they did in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth ; but the true relation of these things to the spiritual ends of the ministry is scarcely yet rightly seen. I plead earnestly for their use, in wise subordination to the great end of parish work, because I have seen with what effect they may be so employed.

My first plea is—*That in the present state of things this class of means supplies the only avenue of access to multitudes of working men.*

It is well to have our churches, our schools and class-rooms open for services and Bible-classes, and if the object were only to discharge our duty, we might perhaps satisfy our consciences that this was

enough. But our object is "to win souls to Christ"—"to save that which was lost"; and till the souls are won and the wanderers gathered to the fold, we cannot, we dare not, be content. But ordinary means fail to reach whole masses of working men. We want to find some first point of contact with them, by which we may hope to influence them for Christ.

Then how did our Master do in like circumstances? People were not in sympathy with His mission as *spiritual* any more than they are with ours; but He used means *other than spiritual* to win the influence over them which He sought for higher things. His works of love upon the bodies and families and temporal condition of the people were not only credentials for His spiritual mission,—they were also the means by which He awakened men's interest in Himself as most manifestly their Friend, who cared for them in respect of interests—their earthly wants and bodily diseases—to which they were already alive. His acts of personal and social kindness were His way of establishing a point of contact with men by secondary means for the spiritual end of His mission.

And here, as everywhere, He is our Pattern. True, the power of working miracles is not in our hands; but there is *something* in our hands—power of *some* sort—by which we, too, may prove the love that is



in our hearts for those whom we would win for Christ. Till this has been done, there are innumerable men for whom our church doors will stand open and our church bells will ring in vain.

I am persuaded there are many men need helping outside the gate of the temple, who may be reached by the disciple's hand of love, which, though it has not the power of miracle, may convey some earthly benefit, by which they shall come to fix a more steadfast and trustful eye upon their benefactors, and be prepared with them to enter into the temple. We cannot hope that the majority of working men, from their present position, will at a single bound reach the elevation of thoughtful, sober, earnest Christians; but, as for those who have come to the Church's platform, Christ is a ladder *up*, by which we may lead them daily to ascend higher, so, for those who are not on that platform, but a lower—it may be even in the horrible pit of drunkenness and profligacy—Christ is a ladder *down*, whose lowest round reaches the lowest level of their degradation, a position which else would be hopelessly beyond the reach of help. The first point of contact for religion in many a case can only be by Christ's representatives descending, in their Master's spirit, to meet them as brethren of a common humanity, and to grasp their hand upon the level of those interests of common life to which they are awake.



My second plea is—*That a most important department of the people's life is their leisure.* What they shall be in Sabbath hours, in their families and in their work, depends on how their leisure time is spent; but if it be not spent under religious direction and influence, an instrument of power is left in the hands of those who care nothing for the welfare of the people. A sagacious magistrate of wide experience in a manufacturing district said to me lately, "My opinion is that we over-educate the people, and pay too little heed to their recreations."

Social intercourse, mental activity, and recreation, cannot but be sought by the sons of toil in their scanty leisure. The question is, Shall they seek these things under Christian or un-Christian influence? Shall the forces which are moulding their character in these important hours be on the side of work or counter-work in respect of religion?

Alas! how sad hitherto is the reply, manifest as it is to every eye in almost every parish. To an alarming extent the people's pleasures are found, and their moral and social—nay, rather, their immoral and selfish—character is being formed, in the public-houses, which more than any other scenes are the schools of character in our land.

All this, I believe, is to a frightful extent chargeable upon the neglect of the Church, its clergy, and its members, in past days. It is time that Religion,

the religion of the God of Love, should assert her rightful sovereignty over the men of our parishes ; that her representatives, in our Master's name, should seek out and welcome every man, with all that is proper to him as a man—his work, his sympathies, his pleasures, his relations to God, to his own constitution, to his family, to his neighbours, and to his country ; that he may be made to feel that Religion smiles on all that God has made him ; that she not only leads him at fitting seasons to the shrine of worship, but cheers him in his week-day toil, and with an ungrudging heart looks on, yea, and rejoices to bless the intelligent and joyous improvement of his holiday and social hours.

Let me offer a few suggestions as to how social gatherings for the improvement and recreation of working men may be made serviceable in the Church's work.

1. *They must not hold too prominent a place.* What the end of parish work is we have seen. It must be ever kept in view. These are not the end, nor principal, but only secondary means of seeking it. I have known parishes in which there were earnest movements of this sort, but for lack of their being kept in due subordination to the great end, the effect was but to give a secular tone to all associated with them. They became to the Church's work, not auxiliaries, but substitutes and rivals. But let

these things stand as subordinate parts of a wisely constructed parish plan, whose great end is sought earnestly by *direct* and self-denying efforts, and they will take the direction of those efforts, as tributaries follow the course of the main stream into which they flow. The plan, in its unity of purpose, will be recognised by all; and all its parts, primary and secondary, will stand together, as pervaded by one spirit, and designed to further the great end.

2. There ought to be a manifest connection of these social gatherings with the purpose of religion. *Parish lectures* may form an important link between the Church and the people. A wise and skilful treatment of almost any subject that can be made popular may make it edifying as well as pleasant; but there is a large range of subjects which are semi-sacred, and which, though they cannot be treated in the pulpit, may be turned to most valuable account in the lecture-room.

There is scarcely any subject so attractive to working men, at least in manufacturing districts, as the various themes of popular science; and there is none by which the enemies of religion have more abused the minds of working men to purposes of infidelity. The astronomical discourses of Chalmers, which were a course of week-day lectures of this sort, exemplify how this class of subject may be made not only to instruct and delight the mind,

but also to lead the wondering hearer, "through Nature, up to Nature's God."

For his own profit, and for the interest and influence of his ministry, there are few things that would be more valuable to a parish clergyman than the necessity periodically to give a course of lectures to his people on themes kindred to the great subjects of pulpit instruction—such as "The Life and Journeys of St. Paul, as illustrating his Writings;" "Events and Places in Sacred History, viewed in their mutual connexion;" "The Typical Meaning of the Jewish Tabernacle and its Services," etc.

3. *Parish readings and addresses*, also, at social gatherings after tea, may be linked very usefully to the clergyman's work. Addresses, however, are apt to be dull, unless care be taken to make them otherwise; and two or three subjects well selected beforehand, and entrusted to men, clerical or lay, who will take the pains to prepare a few wise thoughts, with suitable illustrations, cannot fail to mingle profit with delight.

"A Happy Home;" "The Duties and Joys of Friendship;" "Parental Influence;" "Independence of Character;" "Counsels to Grumblers":—I have seen tea-parties serve the Church's purpose nobly, by means of subjects such as these in the hands of wise and genial men.

And in parish readings I have learned by long



experience that religious subjects, and the religious treatment of a subject, are not unpopular, but in skilful hands become a prime element of interest. I have seen a piece from Tennyson, a fable from Goldsmith, or one of Mrs. Gatty's charming parables from nature, interest the people greatly; but I have never seen them more arrested and delighted than while they have followed Bunyan's Pilgrim between the lions up to the House Beautiful, and joined the holy converse which he held with its fair inmates.

Parochial branches of the Church of England Temperance Society, besides their value for their immediate object, afford excellent opportunities for lectures, addresses, etc., of this sort.

4. These assemblies should be made the *occasions of earnest invitation* to the direct means of grace. Wisely used, they may thus become stepping-stones by which men will be induced to pass into higher scenes of intercourse with the clergyman and his helpers.

Bible-classes, adapted for persons of both sexes and of all ages, are a most serviceable form of the gospel net. The fish want to be attracted; and just as I have seen a fisherman, the day before his expected sport, take care to have a spot in the river *well baited*, so by means of gatherings of this kind, which have a large element of popularity in them, working men may be placed (as I have seen



them) under influences so genial as shall dispose them to accept the warm-hearted invitation to meet the clergyman or the Bible-teacher on a higher platform.

These suggestions, respecting ways of reaching working men, I might illustrate and enforce by many facts from my own experience; but such facts have a meaning for oneself, and for those to whom the circumstances are known, which they cannot have for others. I desire, however, to state generally what that experience has been, which warrants the confidence with which I have spoken, and which is my justification to myself for venturing to offer words of counsel to others.

For nearly twenty years I had the charge of an important parish in a manufacturing town in the Midland district. My population, which at first numbered 7,000, and afterwards increased to 11,000, included a large number of artizans and labourers, who, with few exceptions, were neglecters of all religion, and were very many of them the victims of strong drink. The thirty-two public-houses of my parish were abundantly supported. The church seemed to be opened only for the more respectable folk and for women.

A large ragged school opened for a weekly lecture was soon filled, but the men who attended were few. After two years, a tea party, at which fifty men were present, became the starting-point

for work among the working men of the parish, and for many happy years was interesting and successful beyond anything I had dared to hope.

Its history may be shortly told. In that week in February, 1854, a parochial association of working men was formed, based on an engagement, signed by each member, to adopt and promote among his fellows these four principles,—viz., Godliness, Temperance, Brotherhood, and Economy.

We began with twenty-three members. At first we met in the schoolroom in which the association was formed, and which was open to us on three evenings of the week. As our members increased rapidly (we had 254 at the end of the first year, and this number was doubled in the second), we ventured to rent a large house in the parish, and opened it as our “Parish Public House.” Our object was to provide a cheerful place of resort for our members, to be open every evening of the week—as well as during the day for those who from bad weather or other causes might be without employment—where they might find a useful book, a newspaper, play a game of draughts or chess, or where they might meet friends, join a savings club, a Bible-class, or other means of improvement or recreation.

In our appeal for help we stated that “our aim was to accommodate our plans as nearly as possible,

without sacrifice of conscience, to the habits and tastes of our brethren; and having secured a point of contact with them, and won their confidence, to try to interest them by degrees in something better than mere animal pleasures, keeping our eye ever fixed on the salvation of their souls, as the end of all our endeavours."

The success of our public-house was only limited by the accommodation afforded; and in the year 1856 we appealed for funds, to erect side by side, in a densely crowded part of the parish, a free church and a working men's hall.

The scheme met with abundant sympathy. Led by the zeal and liberality of our committee, the congregation of the mother-church did their part nobly. The necessary funds were provided, and the church and working men's hall were opened simultaneously in December 1859. The Bishop of the diocese, by whose cordial sympathy and liberality the scheme had been fostered, inaugurated this third stage of our progress by preaching at the opening of the church to a crowded congregation of working men. From the first day the church was filled, and the working men's hall (comprising lecture room to hold 300, and good reading and class rooms and library) was occupied every evening in the week with a thriving system of improvement and recreation combined.

From 150 to 300 men attended the Tuesday evening lecture, after which there was open discussion, and at the close of which strangers were invited to join the association. The lecture evening owed its attractiveness in no small degree to a few friends (chiefly clerical, and of these to one especially), who cordially accepted their share in this work as part of their regular course of duty. They became pillars of the institution, and most honoured and beloved friends of its members.

The results of the work proved a rich reward for all our labours. There was a number of working men at our Communion, who were forward in a manner that is rarely seen, to help us in our work. From fifty to ninety men were in constant attendance at our Bible-classes, held at seven o'clock on Sunday mornings, and again on Monday evenings. Cases of men deserting the public-house, the infidel club, and the penny theatre, for the free church and the working men's association, were of constant occurrence. Many a house was transformed from a drunkard's den into a happy Christian home; and the witness of many—and of some very recently—in the peaceful closing hours of life have proved how real and how abiding was the value of that parochial association of working men as an instrument for doing the Church's work.

My confidence, therefore, does not rest in theory.



The delightful experience of many years convinces me that the working men of our parishes are not beyond our reach ; and if we have a mind to try, "whensoever we will, we may do them good."

*I am convinced we may win the working men if we will.*

If they have become alienated, it has been through our neglect. The "living voice of the Church" has been too much spent in delivering oracles in the air, instead of speaking the living words of a Divine and loving message to the hearts of the people. Our religion has failed to influence them, because they have been brought so little into contact with its earnest and loving representatives ; distance has produced first estrangement, and then suspicion, and then often hostility. *Yet may we win the men of our parishes if we will.* Difficulties are not hindrances. Our Master engages that the mustard-seed faith shall remove the mountain difficulty. A true welcome is awaiting those, both clergy and laity, who by all means, *direct* and *indirect*, are prepared in Christ's name to do the work of love among the people. In this the health and usefulness of the Church and the safety and prosperity of the nation will be found. If the parochial clergy will but go forth resolved—each in his own part of the field—to do his best to make our religion the religion of the people, the results we long for will not



fail to come. "Knowledge and wisdom shall be the stability of our times;" the power of strong drink to enslave and embrate our people will be broken; the scoffs of a hollow scepticism will be pointless and impotent, and the public morals will be proof against the profanity and filth of infidel and vicious teachers. Then in the hearts and homes of England religion will have found a better and a more enduring, though not a more rightful, establishment than in England's laws. All men will see the proof that man's Maker is his Redeemer too, and that the true and only "Saviour of society" is neither warrior, nor politician, nor philosopher; but that *alone* Saviour of mankind, who is both the power of God and the wisdom of God. Then we shall have found what is still (so far as the masses are concerned) "the missing link" between England's Church and England's people.



Parochial Temperance Work as part of the Cure  
of Souls.

BY THE REVEREND HENRY JOHN ELLISON, M.A., HONORARY  
CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH, RECTOR OF HASELEY, OXON,  
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## XVII.

### PAROCHIAL TEMPERANCE WORK AS PART OF THE CURE OF SOULS.

THE proposition which I am about to submit is one which, till the arguments in its favour have been set forth, will make large demands upon the patient attention and forbearance of many. It is shortly this: *that in the present circumstances of the nation and of the National Church of England, the parochial organization for the cure of souls in a well-worked parish is incomplete without a branch of the Church of England Temperance Society.*

By the 'cure' or 'care' of souls I understand the charge committed to the under-shepherds by the Great Bishop and Shepherd of souls, the Lord Jesus Christ. As the eye rests upon the picture drawn by Himself, of what the "Good Shepherd" will be, nothing is wanting to contribute to its completeness. We see Him gathering His sheep around Him—knowing His own, and known by them—calling them all by name; by day, as they hear His voice and follow Him, leading them out to green pastures



—if they wander from the track, calling them back—  
if the wolf comes, defending them, even, if needs be,  
at the cost of His life ; by night gathering them  
into the fold, where they shall be safe from the  
ravenous beast—if one, even one, is missing, leaving  
the rest in the fold, that He may seek that one—  
when He has found it, rejoicing and calling even  
angels to rejoice with Him—and when the number  
of the lost is spread over a far wider circle, declaring  
it to be the true mission of the “ Son of man ” “ *to  
seek and to save that which was lost.*”

To the Apostles, who were to extend and perpetuate His work, the very measure of their love to Him was to be their faithfulness to the model He had thus given them. They were to “ feed His sheep,” to “ feed His lambs,” already His by right of discipleship : they were also “ to go out into all the world, preaching repentance and remission of sins,” “ making known the unsearchable riches of Christ,” and so gathering out “ other sheep ” for Him from the midst of a miserable and “ naughty world.” And when at length the Holy Ghost had come—to be at once the Architect of the future Church, and its invisible presiding Spirit ; when the ground plan had been laid, from which the stately building was to rise in all its completeness, it was seen that the double work—the feeding those within the fold, and the seeking those that that were with-

out—was expressly provided for: “He gave some apostles, some prophets, some *evangelists*, some *pastors* and *teachers*, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

I said that “nothing was wanting to complete the picture.” One thing might perhaps have been added by way of contrast, to stand side by side with the other, to enhance its beauty—the picture of an *unfaithful shepherd*, “feeding himself and not the flock.” But this had been already drawn in a passage of singular beauty by the same unerring hand of the Holy Spirit—“Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. *The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost.*” (Ezek. xxxiv. 2—4.)

It would be beyond the scope of my present purpose to attempt to apply this to the history of national churches in their relation to the Church at large. It must be sufficient to say that here in

England, as the Church has been planted in all its completeness—with the apostolic office still existing, with the prophetic also, we doubt not, as God occasionally calls out men of extraordinary gifts for the reproof and the rebuke of sin—the twofold office of evangelist and pastor has for the most part merged into one. The Church has been made commensurate with the nation; it has been endowed by the offerings of its wealthy children with a tithe of the land; the one great fold has been mapped out into separate ones, that each fold may have its shepherd, each shepherd his *παροικία*, his parish, the aggregate of men, women, and children living within reach of his voice; in these he is to see the souls for the tending of which he is to be responsible—primarily indeed to the Lord, who has called him to the ministry of souls, but under Him to the State also, which, for the sake of its own well-being and that of its citizens, has secured to him the territorial rights of an established Church.

In effect, then, the work of a parochial clergyman may be said to be of this kind. Nearest to him are the lambs of the fold, whom he has to receive for his Lord in Holy Baptism, and then, as dearest to Him, tenderly to watch over and train for Him. In a circle beyond them are the faithful souls, more or fewer in number, who have made their choice for Christ, whom the pastor is feeding with the

Bread of Life—the Word of God given for their spiritual instruction, the Incarnate Word giving Himself for their spiritual nourishment. Outside of these, more or fewer again, those who have begun to wander from the way of holiness, who are already within the reach of the ravenous beast ; and these, as they “yield themselves servants” to him, presenting a spectacle of men and women, Christians only in name, but needing again to be evangelized, probably more hardened in unbelief, more deeply fallen from the image of God than those who have never known Him—the living illustrations of the truth enunciated by Him, “If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matt. vi. 23).

And the *parish* is only the unit of which the nation is the multiple. The description of the one is the true description of the other. The nation of England at the present time would present the picture of a central body of devoted, earnest servants of God, shading off into a great outlying mass of heathenism and infidelity ; a mass giving proof at times of savage violence and wickedness which no lover of his country and his kind can contemplate without thoughts of a possible future, when, if the restraining power of God should be withdrawn, the heathenism might break loose from its barriers, and re-enact in England the terrible scenes of the



French Revolution of 1789, or the Paris Commune of 1871.\*

Now, it ought not to be necessary to demonstrate at any length that whatever other causes there may be for this state of things, one is lying upon the surface, patent, acknowledged, acting and reacting both as cause and effect—the national passion for,

\* The following account of the recent riots in Over Darwen and Blackburn will illustrate what has been said :—On the evening of Thursday, May 9th, a few drunken people demanded of the landlord of the “Bird-in-Hand” public-house a supply of beer without payment. On its being refused they burnt him in effigy. The police, having attempted to disperse the crowd, were fiercely attacked with stones; they were then kicked, cuffed, and maltreated generally, and a number badly wounded. Rowdyism was triumphant. During the height of the row a number of the ringleaders, feeling a necessity for a fresh supply of the raw material of riot, went to the “George” Hotel and the “British Queen,” and demanded money, and by means of threats that if their demands were not complied with they would wreck the house, obtained about twenty shillings, which they spent in drink. After smashing the windows of the “Bird-in-Hand,” they set off to the residence of Mr. Ashton, a manufacturer, and broke his windows; from thence to the houses of Mr. Jerrold Snape and Mr. Gillibrand, which they served in the same way. What was true of Darwen is also true, in a greater or less degree, of Blackburn, Burnley, Preston, Accrington, Padiham, Oswaldtwistle, and other places. Most of the ringleaders, besides being primed with liquor on the occasion, have received their education in the public-house, and graduated in the taproom, Sir George Elliott’s vaunted educational institution. The crowd which burned Colonel Jackson’s residence to the ground was led out of Blackburn by a drunken man. A public-house on the



and the national excessive indulgence in, strong drink. If we go forth—I confine myself at present to pastoral work, and that chiefly of town parishes—to our pastoral visitation, scarcely a step can be taken before we are confronted with the presence of the destroyer in one shape or another. We find that in homes, with every appearance of abject poverty, where regular work and good wages should

road was laid under tribute by the mob, to the extent of all the liquor on the premises. The alcoholic liquor in the Colonel's cellar was consumed by the wreckers. After the work of devastation was done, the drouthy crowd returned to Blackburn, and levied black mail on the publicans, some of whom had locked up and retired to bed, but had to get up again and dispose of their liquor gratis, as the lesser of two evils. Take one quotation from the *Burnley Express* of May 18th, showing the proclivities of the crowd, and the wholesale manner in which they were carried out. The following are some of the doings of a mob *en route* from Blackburn to Oswaldtwistle:—"This gang had marched from Blackburn by way of Church, and under the command of a young man, who led them on. They sang at intervals 'Rule, Britannia,' and other popular tunes. They had stopped at most of the inns on the road, and had forced the landlords to supply them with liquor, under the threat that their houses would be sacked. On arriving at Church they halted at the 'Navigation' Inn, and compelled the landlord to bring several gallons of beer. The mob was then harangued by their chief, and, after giving several rounds of cheers, they went to a beerhouse, where they received some beer, and thence to the 'Commercial' Inn. The landlord of the latter place demurred to their application for liquor, but the men were not to be denied, and he had to comply with their requisition before they would depart."—Abridged from the *Alliance News* of May 25th.

have secured comfort and abundance, the wages have been spent in strong drink. We see public worship given up, children neglected; as more of the inner life of the home is laid bare, rags, cruelty, intolerable oppression of the weaker members, are found to be its pervading atmosphere; the inciting cause is still "strong drink." With closer inspection still, to the believer the evidence of the actual presence of the *evil spirit*\* becomes complete. He is "a liar and the father of lies"; and with the intemperate, falsehood is the familiar weapon of justification and excuse. He was "a murderer from the beginning," and to murders of some kind they are being always urged on;—

"Murder, most foul as in the best it is;  
But these most foul, strange, and unnatural."

Scarcely a week will pass, certainly not an assize, but murders of the *most* "unnatural" kind—of wives by husbands, or of children by parents, or parents

\* At the trial of a young farmer named Rowles, at the recent Oxford Assizes, for the murder of his sweetheart, Mary Hannah Allen, the prisoner said "before he shot her he wouldn't have hurt a hair of her head," but "the devil was behind him," "he couldn't help it;" "he loved her as he loved his life." His counsel in his speech for the defence asserted "that he was under the control of some greater power than himself, which urged him on, and caused him to do that which he did." This he urged as a plea for insanity, a plea which the jury refused to admit.

by children, of brothers by brothers, or of women by lovers, or friends by friends—are recorded in the public press; in almost every case the murderer has one uniform account to give: he would not, if he had known it, have hurt a hair of their head; “it was the drink that did it.” We return to the fold only to find the lambs, the sheep, one by one drawn off and destroyed. Our day and Sunday scholars, whom we had watched over with loving care; our *young men*, whom we had brought on to Confirmation, whom we had hoped to see growing up “as the young plants”; worse, alas! in not a few instances our *young women*, who were to have been “as the polished corners of the temple,” are sucked in by the hideous maelstrom of temptation.\*

\* The Rev. D. Kaine, late chaplain of the County Gaol, Manchester, in his Second Annual Report (1869), says: “Of 1,000 prisoners, 157 females and 554 males confessed they were drunkards, and of these a large number were not twenty years of age.” Of the Protestant prisoners, 644 out of 724 had been at Sunday school between seven and eight years each, on an average. Eighty-one had been Sunday-school teachers.

The late Canon Kingsley, who at one time had been opposed to the Total Abstinence movement, told the writer, at a meeting in St. James’s Hall, for the repeal of the Beersshops Act of 1830, that he had started in his parish with the opinion that by means of night schools, reading rooms, lectures, etc., he could influence his young men for good, and keep them straight, but that the public-houses and beershops had completely beaten him. Florence Nightingale, in a recent letter to the Duke of Westminster on the Coffee Public-house Association, says, “God

A few years pass on, and with a closer knowledge of our people, *older men and women*, who had kept up the forms of religion, of whom we had had hopes that they might one day be found among the true Israel of God, are seen to be drifting with the current into the prevailing sin. The strong animal spirits of their youth have passed away; the hopes of life have failed them, or its pleasures have palled upon the sated senses; they have no peace in themselves, no better hope to take the place of others, no joy in the Holy Ghost; and Satan is ever at hand with his "refuge of lies," the evil "spirit" which he presents as the counterfeit of the

speed to your 'Coffee Public-house Association' with all the heart of an old nurse like me, appalled with the diseases of hospitals, and especially of workhouse infirmaries, where the young men patients—at least a very large proportion—come in from 'the drink,' and worse, come in again and again from 'the drink,' knowing that it will be 'the drink' again which brings them there, and will bring them there as long as they live, helpless and hopeless to save themselves, knowing that they are caught and will be caught (like the Hindoo ryots in the money-lender's clutch) in the same desperate trap, which, like the Indian money-lender, extorts a higher and a higher rate of usury every year—another pound of flesh—to their dying day."

Female Intemperance.—The following is an extract from the writer's evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Lords:—"I think Captain Palin's reports were put in. I would just beg to repeat an extract from one of them from Manchester. First of all Captain Palin says: 'In the decade ending 1865, the average of drunken women was 525, whereas in the subsequent ten years the average had risen to 2,570, and



good Spirit of God. "Drink and enjoy yourself!" "Drink and forget your cares." And so with the *ἀσωτία*\* fully established, with increasing deadness of soul, with no relish for Divine things, the body becomes the prey of one or other of the diseases engendered by drink; perhaps the brain is disordered, and self-murder the result; and thus on the dying bed, or at the inquest—if indeed then—the medical diagnosis lays bare the truth that the premature death had been but the effect, of which the cause, if it were truly written, would be the habitual excessive use of strong drink.

in the last year, 1874, there were no less than 3,059 tipsy females apprehended.' I have also an extract taken from the report of the Visiting Justices of the Westminster House of Correction for the last year. They adverted to the subject of the large and increasing number of committals of females for drunkenness, and presented a return showing the occupations of the prisoners committed for this offence in the year 1875, which was as follows: 'Calling themselves charwomen, 850; needlewomen, 796; washers and ironers, 1,330; servants, 166; sewing machinists, 35; bookfolders, 30; artificial flower makers, 28; of no occupation, 1,796; women of a respectable class (such as wives of men with comfortable homes) and women of small independent means, 100: total number of women convicted for drunkenness during the year 1875, 5,131,' out of whom 3,811 had been previously convicted."

\* "*Ἀσωτία*:" if the usual derivation is adopted, *α*-σωζειν, the meaning would be dissoluteness—wasting (not saving) the substance; but if *α*-σωξέσθαι, it would be unsaveableness—not in a state of salvation. Grotius describes *ἄσωτοι* as "*genus hominum ita immemorum vitiis ut eorum salus deplorata sit.*"



This is the experience of the town pastor. There are few villages where, on a smaller scale, the same scenes are not enacted ; and as from your own particular case you generalize to the whole country, you cannot be surprised that a consensus of authorities—such perhaps as have never met together on any one subject—of the members of the clerical and medical professions, of statisticians, of judges, of governors of prisons, workhouses, and lunatic asylums, should declare with one voice that the great stream of pauperism, of crime, of lunacy, of national waste and loss, is mainly fed from this one prolific source ; and that the Convocation of both provinces, emphasizing this judgment, should have declared in their reports that “it can be shown by accumulated and undeniable evidence that intemperance is sapping the foundations of our prosperity, blighting the future, lowering the reputation of our country, and destroying at once its physical strength and its moral and religious life.”\*

But to the shepherd of souls there is one terrible thought in all this, overpowering all others : it is that in every such death he sees the final triumph of the great enemy of souls. “Be not deceived ; drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven.” “In every such death ” among his own flock ; then in how many

\* Report of Committee on Intemperance, Convocation of Canterbury, p. 9.

among the flock of Christ at large! "I reckon," said a late medical coroner of Middlesex, Mr. Wahley, "that 10,000 deaths occur every year in London alone, which should properly be put down to intemperance." If 10,000 in London—and London is far from standing at the head of the list of intemperate places—then probably some 80,000 in the United Kingdom. Men and brethren, is this a sight to look upon with composure? is it safe? Yet this is the sight upon which the eye of God is resting every day. Who shall say but that if the voice of the inspired prophet could be once more heard among us, its utterance would be, "These things hast thou done, and I held my tongue, and thou thoughtest wickedly that I was even such an one as thyself. But I will reprove thee, and set before thee the things that thou hast done." "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord, and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

This then is our national condition at the present moment—the "present distress" which we have to meet. What is the Church to do? the Church commissioned to encounter the kingdom of darkness, with the promise that if true to her mission she shall triumph over every opposing force of the enemy. Is she to sit with folded hands, and do nothing? Is she to fall back on her past or present efforts—on her

educational, her pastoral work, her increased and increasing life, and say in time the evil will be overtaken by these agencies, and will disappear? to talk about the new and better homes she is preparing to build, when the conflagration is raging all around? to stay in the dockyards, laying down ships of an improved type, when the shore is strewn with wrecks, and drowning men are everywhere battling with the waves? Not, surely, if she is the Church of Him who of old cut the Rahab of Egypt in pieces, and wounded the dragon! not if she is the Church of Him who in the fulness of time through death destroyed him that had the power of death, the devil; or of those—the long line of witnesses—who, “not counting their lives dear unto them,” went under His banner, and in His steps, to rescue the Roman Empire from its pagan worship, England from its bloody Druidical rites, New Zealand and the South Sea Islands from their cannibalism, and the Tinnevelly Shanars from their devil worship! It is a mission, a crusade, to which the Church in England is called, but it is a mission to her own perishing children. Nor is she any longer indifferent to the call. Her convocations have rung out the summons, her archbishops and bishops have responded to it: the Church Temperance Society, authorized, accredited by them, recognizing the Church’s order and proceeding on the Church’s lines, is the organization by which she is addressing herself

to the work. Shortly, then, let me describe the principles and method of the Society.\*

It is, from first to last, I need not say, a *religious* society. Whatever secular agencies it may at times call into its service, however indirectly it may concern itself with legislative and social questions, it is only so far as these necessarily enter into and form part of the subject with which it is dealing. It is in itself an association of Christian men and women going forth in their Lord's name to do battle with His and their great enemy; their daily strength His protection, their daily dependence the power of prayer. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

And being such, it is in its first conception a *rescue* society. It is here that its *total abstinence section* finds its place.

It goes forth among these perishing souls; it finds them, in some instances at least, terrified by the coil of evils and sufferings with which the drink is encircling them, flocking together for mutual aid against the common foe. The old total abstinence societies,

\* The history of the movement and its principles are set forth at length in a little volume recently published by the writer—"The Temperance Reformation Movement in the Church of England," 3rd ed. Published by Curtice, Catherine Street, Strand. 2s.



it must be remembered, were the device of the people themselves, when all other measures of self-preservation had been tried, and tried in vain. It finds them, then, in these outer folds, or ready to enter them. It does not for a moment lend itself or lead them to the conclusion that they are safe there. It does not tell them that a pledge of abstinence will save those whom the baptismal pledge (if indeed, baptized) has failed to save, or give to its mutual promise in any respect the character of a lifelong vow. Nor does it permit them to prescribe their new rule of abstinence as a law to the whole community, adding a new commandment, and judging others for its transgression. It does indeed thankfully accept the ever-deepening verdict of science, that the most moderate use of alcoholic liquor must be regarded as a luxury, not a necessity, and, like all luxuries, must be paid for in more ways than one; \* it does recognise the mighty

\* *Dr. Richardson.*—"The duty of my profession is to show, as it can show to the most perfect demonstration, that this cause of intemperance—alcohol—*is no necessity of man*; that it is a product of the laboratory, belonging thereto, and is out of place when it is used for any other than a purely medical, chemical, or artistic purpose; that is no *food*; that it is the most insidious and certain destroyer of health, happiness, and life." (Lecture before the Church Homiletical Society on "The inter-relationship of clerical and medical functions.")

*Sir H. Thompson.*—"I have long had the conviction that there is no greater cause of evil, moral and physical, in this country, than the use of alcoholic beverages. I do not mean



power of association, and of the mutual promise which is the bond of association, in giving help to the first feeble steps of the wayfarers in this (to them) most narrow way; but its true strength lies in another direction. It takes them by the hand—the hand of

by this that extreme indulgence which produces drunkenness. The habitual use of fermented liquor to an extent far short of what is necessary to produce that condition—and such is quite common in all ranks of society—injures the body, and diminishes the mental power to an extent which I think few people are aware of. Such, at all events, is the result of professional experience during more than twenty years of professional life devoted to hospital practice, and to private practice in every rank above it.” (Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury.)

*Sir William Gull* (in his evidence before the House of Lords Committee):—

*Ques.*: “There is a point short of drunkenness in which a man may injure his constitution considerably by means of alcohol?”—*Ans.*: “Very materially; I should say from my experience that it is the most destructive agent we are aware of in this country.”

*Ques.*: “Setting aside the drunken part of the community altogether, great injury is being done by the use of alcohol in what is supposed by the consumer to be a most moderate quantity?”—*Ans.*: “Yes, I think so. I think that, taking it as a whole, there is a great deal of injury done to health by the habitual use of wines in their various kinds, and alcohol in its various shapes, even in so-called moderate quantities.”

*Ques.*: “Does that remark apply to both sexes?”—*Ans.*: “Yes; and to people who are not in the least intemperate.”

*Ques.*: “And people who are in good health?”—*Ans.*: “Yes, people who are supposed to be fairly well. I think drinking leads to the degeneration of tissues; it spoils the health, and it spoils the intellect.”

outstretched brotherly sympathy—the hand, it may be, of one who has himself been rescued, or, it may be, of one who has been kept from falling by the grace of God, yet has been willing, for love's sake, to forego his own indulgence, and to go down to the level of his fallen brethren, if by so doing he may the better bring them up to his; it leads them gently, firmly, in that time of the evil spirit's discomfiture for a season, to the inner fold of the Good Shepherd. He, they are taught, is the one only Saviour; He was manifested that He might destroy the work of the devil; He alone can give repentance and forgiveness for the past, deliverance from the snare of the devil in time to come: and by prayer and scriptural teaching, by the periodical meeting, weekly or fortnightly, as the case may be, while they *stand*, leading them on from stage to stage, till at the Holy Table they are able to renew the true pledge—the renunciation of the devil, the world, and the flesh, and the promise of obedience to their Lord—if they *fall*, never resting till they are raised again, and, amidst it all, not forgetting that there are “kinds” so inveterate that they “go not out but by prayer and fasting.” Thus the total abstinence section of the Society sets about its work of “seeking and saving those that are lost.”

But “saving”—does it save? does it claim, of those that it lays its hand upon, that *all* will be saved? It were strange indeed if it were so, when

the blessed Lord Himself spoke to multitudes who, "because they loved the darkness rather than light," refused to come to the light, that they might be saved. It is enough, as a very fruitful experience is showing to every faithful worker, that *many* are saved;\* that in every such case we can claim for the gospel that it is the same power of God unto salvation as when the Apostle wrote to the Corinthians, "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God:" enough that if one still dies in his sin, the pastor has the unspeakable happiness of feeling that he has "done all that in him lies" to pluck him as a brand from the burning; happy, in my judgment, if he can say "*all*"—even to the giving up of his own unnecessary luxury, that he may show in his own person the power of that cross of Christ which he has to preach to others.

But "rescue work"—how little, if it stands alone, can it affect the sum of the national distress! While we are setting ourselves to save the fallen, the enemy, with the greater rage because he sees the very seat of his kingdom attacked, is spreading his operations

\* The histories of several of these will be found in another small volume of the writer, "Brands plucked from the Burning," being a record of Temperance work in Windsor. Published by the Church Temperance Society, Catharine Street, Strand. 1s.

over wider and yet wider areas. Public-houses are being enlarged, till every corner of almost every street is ablaze at night with the attractions of the gin palace; grocers and shopkeepers\* are adding to their legitimate trade this uncalled-for one of "wine and spirit dealer"; under the shelter of the scriptural "wine," compounds of every kind and of every degree of strength are distilled and offered for the temptation of men and women. Is there no work, then, for the Church still to do in attacking *the causes of intemperance*? Is there not here, at least, a common ground on which all may join, whether using this strong drink in strict temperance, or refusing to use it? The *general section* of the Society is the answer to this question. It invites the whole Church of Christ in England to the consideration of the great subject, and to the practical dealing with it. It aims at reaching the conscience of the nation, and, as the conscience awakens to life and action, to inform and influence its intellect, until the public opinion of the country, at present so warped by custom, so blinded by prejudice, shall have been drawn into new and healthier channels.

I say "in attacking the causes." I mean, of course, the human causes by which Satan has built

\* Proofs of the destructive results of these licences may be seen in the evidence of the writer, Mr. Pease, M.P., and others. (Third Report of Committee on Intemperance.)



up his monstrous edifice of temptation among us. Is it difficult to detect and lay them bare? Are they not to be found in a continuation of legislative enactments, of social usages, and scientific errors, which for generations have played into each other's hands, till together they have overspread the land with that network of temptation which it is the tempter's business to preserve intact?

"*Legislative enactments*"? Is it not the case that that which is now declared, in its extreme forms at least, to be "a deleterious poison,"\* which, looking to its "enmity with the blood of man," ought to be, if made a matter of common sale, sold under checks and safeguards of the most positive description,—has been invested with exceptional privileges—its sale on the Lord's Day legalized when other trades are forbidden—its houses open till late hours at night, when others are closed? Is it not that under the name of "restriction" licences have been conferred on favoured persons, of such a character and to such an extent that a vast trade has grown up amongst us, enriching its members, drawing, it is to be feared, fresh numbers into com-

\* *Sir William Gull* (evidence, page 246): "I know that alcohol is a most deleterious poison." *Ques.*: "That used in large quantities it is poison?"—*Ans.*: "I would like to say that a very large number of people in society are dying day by day, poisoned by alcohol, but not supposed to be poisoned by it."



plicity with its sad results, and, in all the deliberations of the legislature, making its presence felt by the successful resistance offered to every measure of reform? Such restrictions as have been wrung from it—the shortened hours of Sunday, the week-day closing at ten in villages, at eleven in towns, the Forbes-Mackenzie Act in Scotland—have they not shown what might be done in the same direction with a public opinion sufficiently advanced?

“*Social usages*”? Are we not beginning to see that the customs which have come down to us from heathen times, and to which society has given its sanction—the making all joy to consist in the artificial excitement of strong drink, all seasons of rejoicing to derive their zest from the presence of this, all aspirations for health, for happiness, to find their expression in the wine-cup and the “toast”—are but the gilded baits by which the weak members of the body are led on “to revelling, to drunkenness, and such like”?

“*Scientific errors*”? Are not the medical scientists of highest reputation amongst us beginning freely to admit these? Is not a new hygeia forcing itself upon us, which, if it be established, must show that under the plea of strength—strength for the nursing mother, strength for the languid dyspeptic, strength alike for the fever-stricken patient and the slowly mending convalescent—the alcoholic stimulant which

has been ordered has, for the most part, aggravated symptoms, retarded convalescence, sent myriads to the graves from which it was intended to rescue them, and laid the foundation, in countless instances, of that terrible thirst for strong drink which no skill of the physician has afterwards been sufficient to remove, no drug from his pharmacopœia been able to satisfy?

Grant, then, that the parish may be so happily circumstanced that the association for rescue work is not needed, is there no place for those who shall unite together to take their part in the great *national movement*? Are there no prayers to be systematically offered, no preventive agencies to be set on foot, no young to be trained in paths of safety, no counter-actions to be provided, no public opinion to be diligently formed? and for this, periodical meetings to be held or sermons preached, literature to be circulated and a committee formed, whether for vigilance or for action, which shall be for that parish the means of setting and keeping the movement on foot?

I revert then to my opening sentence. I ask earnestly, but respectfully, as ministers of the National Church, with such a machinery made ready to our hand—with others ready to step in if we are found wanting—with Roman Catholics, Nonconformists, Good Templars, one by one organizing and taking

their place in the struggle which is to come—*is there a single parish which can properly stand aloof?*

I know, indeed, the objections which may still be urged; objections, give me leave to say, that have long since been anticipated and met, and as often as dug up from the grave, met and answered again.

I know it will be said that the Church has no business to deal specially with one sin of the flesh only, while there are others, if not as general, at least as bad. As though it were not the glory of the Church that with that other sin it *has* dealt specially in this generation in the houses of mercy with which the land is overspread; and as though it were not a proved fact that in the order of cause and effect strong drink was the prolific source from which almost all the other polluted streams are constantly fed!

I know it may be urged again, that the Church itself is the great Temperance Association. As though it were not the great Penitentiary, the great Educational, the great Missionary Association; and as though it were not by the association of men and women of earnest minds, throwing their force into that one particular channel, that every *special* work of the Church has been and must be carried out.

For the Total Abstinence part of the work, you will be told that it is a mere variety of asceticism; that its logical result is the monasticism of the middle

ages ; or “the counsels of perfection” of a later age, and, as we hold it, of a corrupt branch of the Church of Christ. But it is of the very essence of asceticism, and it may be added, of the “counsels of perfection,” which are so closely allied to it, that the practice, whatever it is, shall be adopted as “a voluntary humility,” as being in itself abstractedly a higher form of the Christian life, and as such, recommending its votary to the favour of God. There is no such claim advanced for the practice of this abstinence: it is “good”—if good in the sight of God—only because of the “present distress.”

You will be reminded again of the letter of our blessed Lord’s example—that He drank wine, that He was reproached as a wine-bibber; and not a word will be said of the whole spirit of that example, the spirit of self-sacrifice—that in an age of which covetousness, the love of ease and luxury, was the besetting sin, He came renouncing all of these—wealth, home comforts, home indulgences, at last life itself; not a word of the use made of the example by His Apostle when contending for Christian liberty—“only use not your liberty for an occasion of the flesh, but by love to serve one another.”

You will hear again that his injunction is to be “temperate in all things,” with a gloss upon the word, that to be “temperate” demands the moderate use; when a more accurate scholarship will show that the

injunction nowhere exists. Πᾶς δὲ ὁ ἀγωνιζόμενος, πάντα ἐγκρατέυεται, "Every one that contendeth for the mastery *is temperate in all things*. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." Do what? The temperance of the trainer for the Olympic games was *abstinence from wine*:—

"Qui studet optatam cursu contingere metam,  
Multa tulit fecitque puer, sudavit et alsit,  
Abstinuit venere et *vino*."

If any practice could be legitimately inferred from a single line—which I am far from asserting—it would be that the Apostle and those to whom he wrote *abstained* from wine.

And that nothing may be wanting to keep back the hand of the rescuer, it will be asserted that the man recovered from his intemperance will be at best but a Pharisee, claiming in his freedom from this sin to be free from all, or substituting for this some other sin of equal heinousness in the sight of God. And so he well might be; but not where his recovery from first to last has been based upon the renewal of the whole man, carried on, in repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, by the operation of the Holy Spirit of God, sought in all the means of grace.

But I notice these objections only to dismiss them. They are the intellectual and religious hindrances



which have been placed in the way of every great reform. They would have arrested the printing of the Bible, the education of the masses, the abolition of the slave trade. They are the withes with which the champions of the several movements were sought to be bound ; they have had no difficulty in snapping them.

I claim for the work, that whatever else it is, it is Christian work—Christian in its commencement, Christian in its progress, Christian in its reference, at every stage and at every step, to that word of the living God, without which, if it be not in accord, there can be no truth in it. I claim for it that it is Church work. The Church of England has done much, within the last fifty years, to vindicate for herself the title of a truly national Church. She has renewed her youth, where alone it can be renewed, at the “Fountain of living waters.” She has taken out her armour from the armoury ; she has proved her weapons. She has not escaped the temptation which belongs to all periods of intense activity—the “disputing about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings.” But already she is calling off her children from these. In her Congresses and Diocesan Synods, as they come face to face one with the other, men are learning to respect one another’s motives, even if they cannot see with one another’s eyes. She has yet to

take a further step. She has to call the willing-hearted, all who are kindled with the Divine fire of love, to go down with her among the masses of their countrymen, there, in their degradation, their sins, their sorrows, their sufferings, to see, in a concrete form, the presence of the hosts of darkness; there man with man, and shoulder to shoulder, her clergy leading, her laymen following—as the tide of battle flows on, her separated children gradually but surely drawn into the conflict—there to forget their points of difference, or if they must hold them still, to hold them in charity; there to forget all but that they are the disciples of one Lord, the soldiers enrolled under one banner, the bearers of one Cross, which never has been, which never will be, lifted up for man and his salvation, but the enemy sees it, and quails before it, and is driven back. She “*has to do it*”? Nay, it is being done. I call as a witness one whose name as a leader among Nonconformists is well known in the north of England, and with his testimony I will conclude.

Mr. Hodgkin, at one of the annual meetings of the Newcastle branch of the Church Temperance Society, in seconding a resolution, said: “I am here, as the humble representative of the Dissenters of Newcastle, in order to express the heartfelt delight with which they see the Church of England, with its splendid organization, its wealth, its long-descended culture,

its deep learning, and its great fund of common sense, descending into the arena to fight with this giant enemy of us all. I have peculiar pleasure in seeing the Church of England coming to fight, as a Church, in this great campaign against the national enemy. There is always a danger lest the Puritan legislation should be followed by some terrible reaction, such as the orgies of the Restoration some two hundred years ago. We must look to the Church of England to bring their great common sense to bear, so that the measures adopted are not Utopian, and not so far in advance of public opinion as to give no chance of success. Above all, we must ask the Church of England—reaching, as it does, both to throne and to hovel, and including, as it does, far more than any other section of the religious community, both the upper and the very lowest classes of the community—to use its influence with our legislators in altering those degrading laws which tend to increase the influence of drink upon us. And if only the Church does succeed in rooting out this great national vice, the most censorious of critics will scarcely be able to deny that it is the Church of England both in name and in power.”



**The Temptations of the Ministry.**

**BY THE RIGHT REVEREND JONATHAN HOLT TITCOMB, D.D.  
LORD BISHOP OF RANGOON.**





## XVIII.

### *THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE MINISTRY.*

I HAVE heard it said, by men of the world, that a clergyman must find everything easy in religion, because he is practically free from temptation. Was there ever an opinion more unreal? How can it be supposed that those should escape temptation who are appointed leaders in the Church, when it is the aim of Satan, if possible, to destroy the very Church itself? "We are not ignorant of his devices." On the principle, therefore, that no man can ever lay bare the hearts of others, until he has first learned the weaknesses and temptations of his own, I venture to consider my subject as exceptionally important; lying, if I may so say, at the root of ministerial usefulness, and demanding the greatest plainness of speech.

Far be it from me to lecture my brother clergy. I desire only to suggest to them a few solemn thoughts for reflection. They must not be surprised, however, if, coming up straight from the

chamber of my own conscience, I report what I have there felt in tones which, though somewhat heart-searching, may nevertheless prove profitable.

I shall divide my remarks into three parts—viz., The temptations of the *pulpit*, the *parish*, and of *private life*; endeavouring, however, to make them all bear on the office of preaching.

I. We have TEMPTATIONS IN THE PULPIT. What are these?

1. *Some arise from our individual characteristics.* Let me ask the man of *literature and scholarship*, for instance, whether he has not been often tempted to overlay the simplicity of Divine truth, by devoting his attention to elegance of composition, to richness of diction, to acuteness of criticism, or to skill in quotation, more than to the conversion of sinners, and the direction of troubled consciences? In the same way I would put it to the lover of *science or moral philosophy*, whether he has not been too frequently tempted to import those elements of human wisdom within the province of his pulpit teaching? Such studies may doubtless have the advantage of enduing style with terseness, and reasoning with correctness; but who save the tempter would ever bring them forward as properly falling within the range of pastoral theology? Should one hearer come to church hungry and thirsting after divine life, how sad to send him away

with hard crusts and dry husks like these, uncomfortable, uninstructed, and unfed ! No less would I ask the man who has a passion for *religious controversy*, whether he is not frequently tempted to twist his texts out of their proper bearing, for the purpose of making them fit into the party struggles of the day ; inflaming his congregation with the spirit of sectarian bitterness, and of uncharitable resentments ? It is bad enough, surely, when we put rhetoric or learning before simplicity ; but when we substitute angry debates on controverted doctrines for the messages of Divine love, and turn our pulpits into an arena of public strife, it is incomparably worse. I am well aware how easily it may be said, "In these days you are bound to show learning, or the thinkers of society will not listen. You must needs discuss questions of the age, otherwise men of the world will accuse you of not being 'abreast of the times' ; you are pledged to 'contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints,' else your witness to the truth will be imperfect." Granted, however, that we ought all to be faithful witnesses of truth, and that the more we are men of intellectual culture the better ; yet should not our preaching be always subordinated to the great work of saving souls, and of building up our flocks in the duties of practical religion ? Without this, I am satisfied

the adversary of souls will invariably get the best of it in our pulpits.

2. *Other temptations come to all preachers alike*; though, of course, with more or less of variation and intensity. One of these is *indolence in the preparation of sermons*,—putting off study, I mean, till it is too late in the week to do anything properly; or, what is worse, preaching the same sermons over and over again to the same congregation; or, even worse still, serving them up as new ones under an adroit disguise of altered texts and of allusions to contemporary events. In this way Satan contrives to convert what ought to be a two-edged “sword of the Spirit” into blunt weapons which can neither pierce, nor even touch a single heart. Another temptation is that of *unbelieving despondency*—a frailty of which the best servants of God are sometimes possessed; yet which certainly comes from beneath rather than from above. Surely it was not of the Lord that Elijah lay down despairing over the success of his mission; or that Jeremiah lamented his life because he thought his prophetic calling a failure. Yet such is the unbelieving despondency of some among ourselves, after years of what they think profitless preaching. “I see no fruits of my ministry,” exclaims one. “I mourn over efforts unrewarded by conversions to God,” echoes another. But whence comes this language



of distrust? Is it anything else than the voice of the tempter, who is seeking to damp the preacher's zeal and to rob him of his peace? Against such murmurings we ought to rise to the consciousness that, as God's messengers, if our witness to truth be faithful, we are responsible for its delivery rather than its success. Another and a worse temptation is *pride*. It was well said by Richard Baxter: "Alas, how frequently doth pride go with us to our study, and there sit with us and do our work! How oft doth it choose our subject, and still more frequently our words! And when pride hath made our sermon, it goeth with us into the pulpit; it formeth our tone; it animateth us in the delivery, and setteth us in pursuit of vain applause." Surely none can challenge this indictment. Think only of the deceitfulness of the heart, and how secretly the spirit of self-sufficiency insinuates itself within the best of us. Is our preaching power great? Do crowded assemblies hang upon our words? Are they swayed to and fro by the moving appeals with which we stir their hearts and consciences? How hard to retain humility, and account ourselves less than the least of all! And what even if our preaching powers be only moderate—will that banish pride? Then why is it that the vicar is sometimes jealous of his more able curate, keeping him from the pulpit lest comparisons

should endanger his popularity? or how comes it that when service is over we are often so ready to catch at passing compliments—nay, even to interpret the silence of our hearers as an inward mortification? Oh, this cursed temptation, which leads us to prefer flattery to usefulness, and which makes us think more of ourselves than our message! We recoil from the idea; we shrink from any thought of its application to ourselves. Yet to confess is better than to repudiate it. For, unless detected and repented of, this temptation will certainly eat like a canker into our pulpits, and wither the fruits of our ministry.

## II. We have TEMPTATIONS IN THE PARISH.

The bearing of these upon the pulpit, though perhaps somewhat indirect, is notwithstanding none the less real; since in various ways they must necessarily affect both the character and force of all our preaching. From whence do they arise?

I. *From the influences of the world.* What preacher can lay his hand upon his heart and affirm that, under one form or another, he has not found the world a snare to him in his pulpit work? We may possibly mix in society too freely, or we may withdraw from it too exclusively. On either side we are met by temptations. On the one hand you think it right to enter into society. You say—and I think well—that “the pastor should

be the friend of his parishioners; that the ties of social brotherhood are too sacred to be severed by professional exclusiveness; that by mingling with his flock, in their family circles, he draws them to himself in closer bonds of affection, becomes better acquainted with their spiritual wants, and is therefore more likely to be useful to them in his preaching." But how hard to preserve true consistency of position in the midst of this! There is, perhaps, no part of a clergyman's duty which needs greater watchfulness, because nothing more easily drops down into worldliness. Think of the just satire we provoke if in this sociability, either by our levity of conversation, or by our too evident enjoyment of the pleasures of the table, or by our listening without reproof to improper language, we allow a man of the world to leave us saying, "These parsons are agreeable enough in society; but they are one thing in the pulpit, and another thing out of it." How fatally must this re-act upon our spiritual influence when such a man attends our next Sunday's ministrations! As soon as this result has been brought about, Satan has done his work. We have injured our usefulness, and the tempter has triumphed. Or take the opposite choice. You say that "in view of dangers like these, it is better to withdraw from society altogether; that a parish priest should be known only

in his ministerial duties." But is there no danger on that side as well as on the other? Think how easily, by this rigid exclusiveness, we may gradually contract habits of personal selfishness, become narrowed in our powers of sympathy, lose manliness of character, remain ignorant of human nature, and silently fall either into a form of melancholy or austerity, which will repel the young, and give men of the world an utterly wrong impression of the beauty of religious life. I am far from saying that in either of these lines of conduct such results are necessary. But are they not our temptations? Let us, then, watch and pray, lest, whichever course we adopt, we enter into them.

2. *There are temptations which arise from the activity of modern church life.* Let us bless God for this activity. Never can we be too thankful that we live in an age of religious earnestness, when associations of all kinds for doing good are at work throughout the length and breadth of the land. At the same time let us not forget that they may possibly become drawbacks to our pulpit and parish usefulness. Have you never known men who, in their zeal for these public duties, are seen at almost all the anniversary meetings of our great religious societies, who attend all sorts of conferences about the popular questions of the day, who sit constantly on committees, read papers at Church congresses,



deliver lectures at public institutions, write for the press, and take part in parochial missions? It may be an exaggeration to say that any one man attempts to perform all these works in their entirety. Yet are there not many who, with the best of motives, distribute their untiring energies over large portions of these works and labours of love? What is the result? Go into the day-schools, and read the log-book. Go into the parish, and inquire after house-to-house visitation. Go into the church, and listen to the hurriedly prepared sermon. Can this be called right? How can it be right to let work which is voluntary and self-imposed take the place of that which is primarily entrusted to us by the Lord? The parish, properly described in old Saxon, is "a cure of souls"; and the parson of the parish is held, by ecclesiastical law, as wholly responsible for its proper direction and supervision. But how can this be when time is absorbed and strength exhausted on activities which have no direct bearing upon those more special functions to which we were solemnly consecrated? Is there not the tempter here once more, who has seized upon our noblest impulses in order to cajole us from the strict path of duty, and to weaken the power of our parish ministry?

3. *May I not add that other temptations arise out of the peculiar position of independence which the law*



*assigns to the parochial clergy?* There is little need to remark that, a benefice being tenable for life, the holder of it, so long as he keeps within law, may be as busy or idle, as courteous or cynical, as obliging or obstinate, as he pleases. The position is one of singular independence; but it is, at the same time, one of immense responsibility, and of still greater temptation, especially if any of us be naturally impatient of contradiction, and inclined to personal autocracy. It can then generate in us a love of power which is capable of setting a whole parish into flames—creating violence in vestry meetings, schisms among church workers, alienation of heart in church servants. “Am I not head over the parish?” is the self-deceiving plea. “Is it not *my* work to govern and the duty of *others* to obey?” Yes. But is not your commission *ministerial*, rather than *magisterial*? If our authority, instead of being softened by love, be exercised only with headstrong wilfulness, how can we expect to inspire confidence in our pulpits? When the preacher is a Diotrephes, the best sermon becomes little better than “sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.”

### III. We have TEMPTATIONS IN PRIVATE.

It will, of course, be understood that I am speaking only of those temptations which bear upon our usefulness as preachers.

#### I. *Some of these are to be found in domestic life,*

the moral effects of which upon the power of the pulpit are no less serious than those we have already considered. Is it not true, for example, that the very fulness of our ministerial labours may sometimes lead us to the neglect of careful family training? Have we not all known instances of our children being allowed, through the bustle of our lives, to grow up ill-managed and ill-trained—the painful discovery being made only when they are at ~~at~~ an age which is almost too late for correction? Thus, how sadly the vicarage becomes robbed of its beauty, when the talk of its younger members is flavoured with smart satires, with unkind surmisings, and with captious criticisms of their neighbours! When this is so, consider the moral unfitness which must be induced among us for dealing in our pulpits with questions which bear upon the regulation of family life. How blunted our exhortations on the ears of our audience! Nay, how consciously unreal within our own souls! And how suggestive of the ill-natured, yet well-deserved retort, “Before these men preach to us on this subject, had they not better attend to their own homes?”

Again, is it not sometimes known that a good man, while earnest with his flock in proclaiming the duties of love to others, has the character in his own family of being petulant and arbitrary? If so, consider the effect which this must have upon the

domestic appreciation of his pulpit utterances. What a bar to the reception of truth!

These are not little matters. They are blots which need erasure; temptations which require heart-searching, repentance, and conquest, if we desire to have even our best-prepared sermons made really effective and useful.

2. *The most serious forms of private temptation, however, are to be found in our inner life.* Let us not deceive ourselves. The best homiletical lectures will utterly fail in their purpose if the secret spring of our inner life before God be not kept fresh and full. What if, by the temptings of the wicked one, we lose our spiritual unction? What if, through pressure of work, we be led into the slothful exercise of meditation, reading, and prayer? What if, while outwardly models of pulpit excellence, that saying become true, "They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own have I not kept"? (Cant. i. 6.) I have often found it well to read through the pastoral epistles of St. Paul, in order to provide thoughts for personal meditation and self-examination on the duties and shortcomings of my ministerial work. Let me commend this habit to my younger brethren. Those portions of the New Testament form, in some respects, the richest legacy of Divine inspiration for the deepening of our spiritual life as workers in the ministry of the Church. In other

parts of Scripture we may be tempted to read the words as subject-matter for the pulpit ; for the benefit of others rather than as food for our own souls. Who has not often unconsciously drifted away in that direction ? But here we are brought face to face with that which alone concerns ourselves. We read our duties, we see our failings, we look into a mirror of truth which shines upon us with special light, and photographs our ordination vows upon the conscience.

Whatever medium may be used, however, for the purpose of sustaining this holy principle of self-culture, one thing is clear—we shall never be duly qualified for the ministry of the Word without it. Our Church services may be regularly performed, our ritual may be beautifully perfect, our parish business may be systematically accomplished ; but, in the midst of all, our pulpit work will be perfunctory and lifeless. And, if this be so, what possible result can it have but that of making those committed to our charge as cold and lifeless as ourselves ?

While it is well, therefore, to pursue the critical study of homiletics ; while no pains can be misspent in improving the accuracy of our scholarship, the fulness of our expositions, the clearness of our style, the due arrangement of our thoughts, or even the force of our delivery, let us remember that, above all such requisites for successful preaching, is the need

of watchfulness and prayer in the things which belong to our own inner life with God. In other words, the man who burns most with love for Christ and for souls, who is filled most deeply with the Holy Spirit, will always be (*cæteris paribus*) the best messenger of the gospel, and the brightest ornament of our Church pulpit.



## The Responsibilities of the Ministry.

BY THE REVEREND FRANCIS PIGOU, D.D., RURAL DEAN, VICAR  
OF HALIFAX, YORKSHIRE, AND CHAPLAIN-IN-ORDINARY  
TO THE QUEEN.



## XIX.

### *THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MINISTRY.*

MY subject, *the responsibilities of the Christian ministry*, though trite and familiar, is in such intimate connection with our high and privileged office that it is one of which we cannot be too frequently reminded. As a rule, do we not need to be reminded most of truths with which it is assumed we are conversant and familiar? Treatises, both excellent and elaborate, on the pastoral office, are in the hands of the working clergy, who find within the pages of Bridges "On the Christian Ministry," Vinet's "Pastoral Theology," How's "Pastor in Parochiâ," Blunt's "Directorium Pastorale," and kindred works, not forgetting the late Bishop of Winchester's touching Addresses, counsels, hints and suggestions, as valuable as they are needful, not only in connection with the exercise of the ministry in its varied outward aspects, but in connection also with that hidden, inward life, which gives the tone to the outward ministrations. On the outward aspect and phase of the ministry there is little left to be said, except in the form of such

addenda as the experience of the more active of the parochial clergy can supply, and as the result of a more enlarged and comprehensive view of real parochial work. We have only to open any one of the treatises above named to find familiar topics ranged under much the same heads. We may, in fact, say that the responsibility of the Christian ministry is *assumed* throughout; it is like a dominant hue in a picture, or like the under-tone in music, more or less present in the strain. In the nature of the pastoral office; the relation of the pastor to his flock; the ministry of God's Word; the administration of the Sacraments; the visitation of the sick; pastoral converse; pastoral guidance; schools; lay co-operation; parochial institutions: in all these, and more which might be added, the thought, I repeat, of responsibility is *assumed*. It attaches itself of necessity to an office of such peculiar and varied exercises; for a pastor is, in the words of George Herbert, "the deputy of Christ for the reducing man to the obedience of God." And yet, when you consider that there may be a perfunctory discharge of the duties of the ministry, and that men take holy orders, as in the case of college tutors, without distinctly exercising any spiritual function, as also that with the most active and zealous there is a danger of familiarity with sacred things, this thought of ministerial responsibility is the one which we can least afford to regard as a matter of course, or assume

as vividly felt and generally recognized. It lies, so to speak, *at the back* of all that is exercised in the sight of men, as the great forces of Nature are veiled under the more apparent of her phenomena. It is as the mainspring which noiselessly puts into motion and secretly regulates the timepiece; and to my own mind it has a grave and momentous bearing on our ministerial life, as the one thought which, in so far as it inspires, and is always more or less present, operates as a great safeguard against indolence or weariness, and is a spur and incentive to work while it is called day, remembering that the night cometh when no man can work. What care, also, is properly taken by way of preface to impress a due sense of this responsibility upon those contemplating taking holy orders! Can too great care be taken? Would it not also assist in placing the ministry in its truer light if we spoke of it less as a *profession* than as a distinct and holy *vocation*? Consider the safeguards with which admission to holy orders is fenced about and compassed, and the qualifications which are assumed and required. Men are admitted after due inquiry into their qualifications, abilities, and personal character, at an age later than in other professions, when the character and judgment are in some degree formed, and the opportunity is still allowed of withdrawal before the indelible vow is taken. The character is attested by three clergymen, and endorsed by



the assent of a congregation, challenged in the most public manner to bring forward any reason why he should not be ordained. A higher order of education and general culture is expected of a candidate for the ministry. He is to teach others, and must needs himself be taught. No one can over-estimate the importance of these qualifications, nor should any one undervalue them, when we consider the various minds with which he may have to deal, and the different relationships into which he is necessarily by his ministry brought. His calling is definite and distinct. It is his to minister in *holy* things. His work involves, both theoretically and practically, a separation from the ranks of secular men and secular professions. He is a shepherd rather than one of the sheep. The legislature encourages this separation by imposing civil disabilities, granting certain dispensations by which a clergyman is debarred from what might prejudice his usefulness, and freed from what might unduly tax the time which would more properly be devoted to his immediate duties. In the exhortation at the Ordering of Priests he is reminded how he ought to forsake and set aside all worldly cares and studies, and expression is given to the hope that he will "apply himself wholly to this one thing, and draw all his cares and studies this way." So distinct, moreover, and sacred is his calling, as to be regarded irrevocable and not voluntarily to be relinquished. And further, great

grace is bestowed upon him at his ordination, in the very formula used by our Lord Himself the Holy Ghost is invoked, not only to guide and sanctify, but also to give by His power and presence sanction and emphasis to all ministerial acts,—so much so, and so truly, “that the effect of Christ’s ordinance is not taken away by the wickedness of a minister, nor the grace of God’s gifts diminished from such as by faith and rightly do receive the Sacraments ministered unto them, which be effectual because of Christ’s institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men.” (Article XXVI.)

Such are some of the precautions taken to secure, as far as human judgment can discern, men qualified by grace and gifts for the ministry; and at the threshold of their entrance upon it they are thus addressed: “Have always therefore printed in your remembrance how great a treasure is committed to your charge.” In what, then, does the great, may we not say awful, responsibility of the ministry really lie? It lies in this: that to the minister of Christ is confidently, as well as authoritatively, entrusted the care of the spiritual guidance, shepherding, and welfare of immortal souls. He is not by constraint, but by choice, not by any compulsion, but of his own free will, a messenger, watchman, steward of the Lord. He is to teach and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord’s family; to seek for Christ’s sheep that are dispersed abroad,

and for His children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever. The Church of God has been purchased with the blood of His dear Son, and, to estimate the responsibility of the ministry, we have to "print in our remembrance that to us is entrusted the care of immortal souls." "All souls are mine," is a text to which I have often thought we ought to give prominence: it should be on our study wall, that the eye may rest upon it when we are preparing for our public ministration; it should ever be in our remembrance, wherever our lot is cast, whether amongst the cultured and refined classes, or amongst the illiterate and degraded. "All souls are mine." And as each one committed to us has a soul to be saved, to be plucked as a brand from the burning, the salvation of each separate soul depends largely, humanly speaking, on the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of our ministration. God is pleased to use human instrumentality in connection with the carrying out of His Divine purpose toward mankind. He might have created a new race, and thus superseded the race fallen from righteousness. He might have saved a fallen race without the intervention or co-operation of any instrument; but it is in the kingdom of grace as in every department of creation—God uses means towards the accomplishment of His will. Ours is at once the privilege and responsibility of being fellow-workers with God. To

each soul we are a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. Every sermon we preach furthers a soul's salvation or increases its condemnation. Every private monition, as it is received or rejected, is helpful to the spiritual life, or makes its growth less possible; for the judgment day is being every day rehearsed, and is now being carried out, either in the adding daily to the Church of such as shall be saved, or in the condemnation of the reprobate; either in the sealing of the elect, or in the branding of the lost. How grave, how momentous, therefore, our work, when we set before us, calmly and distinctly, the issues for weal or woe, which may hang on our ministry! And this the more so when we remember that the laity are, as a rule, very dependent on the recognized ministers of religion for instruction in things spiritual. It is now as it has ever been. Men have been set apart from their fellow-men for the definite and distinct work of the sacred ministry; and with comparatively rare exceptions, the mass of the laity look to the clergy for spiritual instruction and guidance, as we look to a physician for medicine, to a lawyer for counsel. The very distinctness of our office, the peculiar character of our vocation, the recognised authority of the ministry, the assumed or allowed superiority in the knowledge of God's Word, and that deference to our sacred calling which the laity spontaneously accord, and only reluctantly cease to pay,—all this establishes



an especial claim on us in their estimation ; it makes them quick to notice where we fall short of their ideal of the ministry, and equally quick to appreciate and commend whenever we in any measure realize what they not unnaturally look for at our hands. To a certain extent, of course, the responsibility of which I am speaking is, and must be, limited. If a clergyman felt that he would, at the great judgment day, be held responsible altogether and entirely for the eternal state of every soul committed to his care, I venture to doubt whether the men would be found who would take holy orders, and with holy orders so tremendous a responsibility. We cannot imagine, consistently with the fact of our free will to choose or refuse, that God would regard us as responsible for some soul toward which, according to the best of our knowledge, and with prayerful desire, we had been true and faithful ; in whose case no means under Him, in our power, had not been tried and tried in vain, There are in every parish, in every congregation, those who hear and do not obey ; no saving impression is made. The word falls on stony ground. The heart remains unrenewed, and therefore the life continues unaltered. You preach repentance, but they do not repent. You preach the need of faith, but they do not believe. You warn them that this is the day of grace and opportunity, but they take no warning ; you tell them God offers us salvation as a free gift, but



they stretch out no hand to accept or appropriate this gracious offer. It is not your fault—it is entirely their own—if they are not saved. It is not the happiest view of the ministry, it is not even amongst its consolations, that in the twofold exercise of the ministry the *justice* of God is being vindicated as well as His *mercy* manifested, and the judgment day being rehearsed; for who would not rather know that he had been instrumental in *saving* and not *condemning*? Yet we must not forget that we are here to do the will of *God*, and not our *own*, and thus a *lost* soul may be as great, though unwelcome, a proof of our faithfulness as a soul *saved*. When we can conscientiously say that no means on our part has been wanting, no persuasion, no pleading, no prayer, but that in season and out of season we have sought unsuccessfully to convert a sinner from the error of his ways, saddening as the thought must be, yea, almost overwhelming, still we cannot but feel that results rest with Him in whose hands are the issues of life and death, and that the faithful servant of Christ will not be held responsible for the wilful unbelief and persistent indifference which has brought about in the end the ruin of a soul. But this is a marginal thought. It seems to me that the very idea that we may, under God, be instrumental in the perdition of a soul, so far from being one from which we should extract consolation, should the rather spur us on to increased

earnestness, and quicken us to a more devoted effort to win souls to Christ. But, oh! how quickened would our zeal be, how devoted our labours, how oblivious of self, how full of the cross our life, how should we lay that cross on personal tastes, favourite pursuits, and even innocent amusements, if we had "printed in our remembrance" that time is short and eternity is long; if we set before us vividly the earnest realities of heaven and hell; if we believed with the whole strength of personal conviction that the opportunities of salvation are bounded by the grave, that death sets the seal to our probation, that there is no second Calvary, no cross with our crucified Jesus lifted up in the place of torment, no renewed opportunity reserved for those who have despised the opportunities of this present life and received the grace of God in vain! What life it would impart to our prayers, to our exhortations to repentance, to our pulpit utterances, and to every sermon! what weight it would give to every rebuke or godly admonition, if with our whole soul, without mental reservation, and therefore not with faltering tongue, we *believed* in eternal life and everlasting death, and with that earnestness which has been defined "as the peculiar power of making oneself believed by others," we preached the truth! Too many preach truth as if it were fiction: the result is, the hearer is not convinced, because he is not assured that the preacher is himself

convinced ; and until our people are satisfied that we are ourselves preaching from experience, and our utterances have in them the ring of conviction, we shall never bring them to the great end of preaching ; we shall never lead them to heart-searching, and to that awakened solicitude which finds vent in the cry, "What must I do to be saved ?"

This therefore brings me to say, that of the three particulars in which the responsibility of the ministry mainly consists, we put first and foremost, not sacraments, which edify but do not awaken, but the *faithful preaching of the pure and unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ*. And what do we understand by this —by that message which God has promised to own and bless, and which wherever delivered is accompanied with His blessing ? It is the lifting up of Christ to the eyes of perishing sinners, the setting forth of that *finished* work on the cross which no merit of our own can claim or procure, and no work of our own can appropriate. It is to insist, as God's Word insists, on the radical corruption of human nature, the universal guilt of man, the doom which awaits him if unsaved, his lost state out of Christ, the awful fact that until he is reconciled to God in Christ Jesus the wrath of God abides upon him. It is to proclaim the love of God manifested in the gift of His dear Son ; His willingness that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth ; that

salvation is offered without money and without price as the free gift of God ; and that on whosoever believes there is bestowed the gift of "eternal life," a *present salvation* by which we are delivered with a threefold deliverance from the guilt, dominion, and love of sin. It is to teach that we work *from* life, and not *for* life ; that we are saved that we may work, and do not work that we may be saved ; that our way is from the cross, and not to the cross. And that this may be realized, what need is there to insist upon the work and office of the Holy Ghost, Who rules this present and last dispensation ; that as "no man can call Jesus the Lord but by the Holy Ghost," so it is His work to convince of sin, and through conviction of sin to convince of righteousness ! We have to press this on men,—that the repentance and faith promised for them in their baptism must be consciously and personally exercised, as no god-parent could exercise it for us ; that as we act on the godly motions of the Spirit given to us at our baptism, we fulfilling our part in bringing the infant to Holy Baptism, and God fulfilling His part in receiving and blessing, we are led on to that crisis in the soul's life which is called conversion, in other words the complement of baptism, and thus conscientiously fulfilling the condition on which God bestows salvation, we accept Christ, so that He is "in us the hope of glory" ; and, enabled to say, "It pleased God to reveal His



Son *in me*," we have within us the earnest, if we persevere, of final salvation. I say it here, and say it with the voice of one who often asks forgiveness for the imperfect teaching of a large period of his ministry, that, to my own mind, it is in the tone of our message, the character of our preaching, the statements we make in the pulpit, the views we propound from Sunday to Sunday, and the general burden of our discourses, that much of the responsibility of the Christian ministry lies. Few men and women inquire for themselves. Their faith is second, not first-hand. They take on trust what they hear from our lips, unless the statement be extraordinary or so eccentric as to provoke discussion. They assume that questions of theology, practical or speculative, we have made our *métier* and study. They regard us as their spiritual pastors and teachers. In some cases the recognition of our office, of which I have already spoken, in other cases tacit acquiescence in what they hear, indolence of mind, dislike of the trouble of thinking, predisposes our people to that implicit dependence on us for instruction in the way of life which makes the ministry so grave, so responsible a trust. For let men say what they please of preaching—let the man of letters criticize, and the cynic laugh to scorn—let the shallow sceptic ridicule, and the unbeliever deride it, it is now, as it has ever been, the great instrument under God for the awakening, con-



version, and edifying of His people. Sacraments do not do the work of preaching. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The word of the living God preached, the truth as it is in Jesus heralded in momentary dependence on the accompanying power of the Holy Ghost, arrests, arouses, persuades; and when that message is delivered in its simplicity, when, after much secret prayer that we ourselves may be taught of God, we go fresh from our study to our pulpit, from our knees before God to face our people, from communing with Him on the mount to return with the testimony, our face shining as it were with a glory which the people see, then we may humbly hope that this exercise of the ministry as often as the occasion presents itself has been exercised under a deep and powerful sense of its high privilege, as well as of its great responsibility.

But what need of secret prayer, if we would have the open reward! It is told of a clergyman whose ministry was greatly blessed, that he observed a stone-breaker on his knees by the wayside breaking stones. He asked him why he knelt when he broke the stones. The reply was, "Sir, I find I break stones best when kneeling." He said to himself, "The stone-breaker has taught me a lesson. If my preaching is to be more heart-breaking and soul-convincing, I must make my sermon more a matter of prayer; I must be more on my knees for my people." And

if God does not always give us to see the open reward of secret prayer, if we do not see the word confirmed with signs following, if one must sow and another reap, one must toil in faith and another enter on his labours, yet I know few such legitimate sources of satisfaction to the mind of one yearning over souls and deeply impressed with the solemnity of his office, as that which God allows us to feel when, descending from a pulpit, we can say, "Thank God I have not been preaching myself, but preaching Christ. I have not been propounding my own views of truth, but the truth itself. I have not frittered away the golden opportunity in learned criticisms which do not touch the heart; in elaborate disquisitions which may satisfy the intellect, but do not move the soul; in the discussion of some knotty point which does not lead to prayer; in the enforcement of some tenet not essential to salvation. I have not preached a moral essay flavoured with Christianity, nor a gospel watered down to suit the palate of those who love God's promises, but dislike the threatenings of His law. I have not put a congregation to sleep with dull platitudes and with utterances which are like drops of opium on leaves of lead; but as one standing between the living and the dead, as a dying man to dying men, as ministering to those who may be in eternity before another sun has run its course, I have been "an ambassador for Christ," beseeching

men to be reconciled to God ; as a steward of the mysteries of the kingdom dispensing the bread of life ; as a faithful shepherd feeding the flock ; above all, speaking in the name of my Lord, as if He were Himself amongst the hearers, and saying in His name, "Why will ye die?" Ah! if we realized what one once suggested to me—that our Lord Himself might be amongst our listeners, over-hearing and noting what we say, and how much of Him there was in our sermon—should we not also realize that the nature of our preaching had a foremost place amongst the responsibilities of the Christian ministry?

Next to the responsibility that rests on the general tenor of our teaching let me put the responsibility of the *personal example* of the minister of Jesus Christ. We must preach faith, and live morality. We may be earnest, energetic, eloquent, learned, benevolent, and good organizers ; but earnestness, eloquence, and energy are not *holiness*. They may be found united in one and the same man whose life is not "hid with Christ in God." There is a familiarity with sacred things which may be to any one of us a peculiar snare. Ministering habitually to others, we may get credit for a sanctity which may not belong to us. Preaching continually to others, men assume that we live up to what we preach, and our own hearts all the while may contradict this. Administering habitually the Holy Communion, we

may be of those who least practise self-examination, and least exercise faith and charity. Our household may not be a pattern for others to copy. Our life may not be a mirror before which others may safely dress themselves. By our vocation we are publicly pledged to a devout life ; we are, as it were, so committed to it by our vocation and public engagements, that our people naturally, and not unreasonably, look to us as patterns to copy and examples to follow. How different must be the whole character, mind, outcome of the ministry, where a man only keeps up appearances which his heart and conscience belie, and that ministry which is exercised with a clear conscience before God, with few self-reproaches for inconsistency, and with a conscious sense of His favour, which no wilfully indulged sin or vicious habit is estranging from us ! The difference must be as great as the difference between working in the dark and working in the light. In the one case a sense of *duty* is the utmost to which the man rises ; in the other case he has great *joy* in his work for his Master. If there be nothing distinct in our life, how can we hope to influence others ? More sinners are converted by *holy* men than by *learned* men. If we are worldly-minded, how shall we influence the worldly-minded ? If there be nothing separate and decided in our demeanour and deportment, in the society we seek, the books we read, the recreations



we prefer, how shall we ever impress others with the *distinctness* of our vocation? The conduct we exhibit in the eyes of men becomes a pattern for them to follow. The lives of ourselves and of those around us must be so mixed up, in the esteem of men, with our doctrine, as to be taken by them as exponents of that doctrine; and thus we are either lifting them up by our example to a likeness to Christ, or drawing them down by our unworthy living to a yet wider distance from Him. Every earnest, devout, humble, truthful, self-denying man is daily penetrating others with the brightness of his own life. Its secret influence steals upon us like the early dews of morn, as the fragrance of the honeysuckle at the open lattice; like the shadow of St. Peter, it heals where it falls. But what must be the effect on others where our life belies our preaching—where solemn ministerial acts are in any degree made less solemn because of him who officiates—where the people feel that he is doing that with which his life does not accord? The clergy enjoy little or no privacy. Our life, therefore, is a short sermon. “*Longum iter est per præcepta, breve et efficax per exempla.*” The rhetoric of a holy life tells and persuades. Men are still won by those who have themselves been won. There are all around us those whose interest it is to endeavour to prove Christianity untrue. The reason of this is plain: it so condemns



them. How quick are such as these to detect the difference between professional declarations and a consistent walk ! If there be carelessness, remissness, want of downright heart in the ministerial life, can it fail to harden in sin all those who, while not really doubting Christianity, are ever trying to combine enough of it to quiet conscience with a worldly, irreligious life. If our *words* awaken apprehension, the inconsistent life may lull this apprehension on the part of our hearers to rest ; and oh, the snare of securing what is called “ popularity ” by being no pattern ! Open sin would shock and disgust. We should forfeit character, and be no pattern. But the world loves that easy-going and respectable worldliness which, so far from stirring conscience and awakening souls, makes it more easy for its votaries to veil over the sharper and severer truths of Christian faith, and to combine a decently religious appearance with an inveterate and absorbing love of the world. There is, indeed, a preaching of almost any amount of Christian truth without stirring up Satan, if the clergyman’s life exhibit the unhappy union of theoretical excellence with decent, commonplace behaviour. Such a life excuses, if it does not justify, their own, and they will gladly let us *preach* as we like, if only we will let them *live* as they like. So confessed is it, so self-evident, that we must “ adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things,”

and recommend what we teach by the lustre of our own example, that whilst we rank it high amongst the responsibilities of the Christian ministry, we can but pray God that He would evermore inspire us with a sustained spirit of watchfulness, with that habitual self-restraint which takes the form in one case of a temperate use of His creatures, in another of a restrained and moderate enjoyment of life ; and that ours may be a holy fear of doing anything by which the ministry might be blamed, and occasion given to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. The worldly society in which we are seen to mingle, the tone of our conversation, the evident ambition, which, while it does not carry its mark of disgrace upon it like many open sins, spoils the finest character, and extinguishes the spirit of grace ; the notorious love of the world in any one form ; the worldliness of our families, the sanction we give to our children to go where we feel our character would be compromised or influence weakened were we to accompany them ; the light in which we are regarded as pleasant companions, entertaining guests with a fund of jest and joke ; the passionate exclamation, the quick or sullen temper, the harsh, unkind, or ungenerous action : O the injury that this may do to the cause of Christ ! the blighting glare of unreality it may cast over the most zealous services in the more direct work of the ministry ! Surely, when we remember Whose we

are and Whom we serve, we need to question ourselves in this wise : " Am I a light-bearer shining on other hearts ? Am I as salt, salting what is corrupt around me ? Am I, under God, raising all around me to a higher and a holier standard, or am I furthering and encouraging those mutual concessions and compromises which, however they may for the time lull conscience to rest, are but anodynes, which, when their effect is over, discover to us that the mischief is still there ? O for the spirit of all grace and all purity and all power ! O for the Holy Ghost, with His sevenfold gifts, the blessed unction from above, and for that decision for God which saves us from allowing human opinion to be our standard, or perilous popularity our aim, but enables us to make the Word of God our rule and His favour our one desire !

And yet once more. After the nature of our preaching, and our personal example, may we not add this—*thorough devotedness to our work* ? " For God's sake," wrote Fénelon to one about to be consecrated a bishop, " do not do your work by halves." How grave an injury may be done to the Lord's work if we do it perfunctorily, where it is evident the man's heart is not in it, and his work is not his *joy* ! How frequent our Lord's warnings against putting the hand to the plough and looking back ! How earnest the emphatic words, " He that would come

after me must take up his *cross* and follow me” How the Master’s mind and spirit animated His servant St. Paul, and how he impressed on his deacon, “Give thyself *wholly* to these things”! There is a large class of minds who appreciate *devotion* to work. They cannot tolerate or believe in a drone. Accustomed themselves to habits of industry—some having amassed fortunes, under God’s blessing, by diligently attending to their business—they are impatient of any man who takes a work, sacred or secular, in hand, and does that work carelessly, and with no heart in it; and often where you fail to persuade them by your preaching, you command their respect by your evident devotedness, and this prepares the way for a more ready reception of the words spoken. They feel the man *means* what he says—that he is thoroughly in earnest. What would be said of a lawyer who frittered away his time, or spent it in pursuits not appertaining to his profession? What would be thought of a physician who was seen idling his time? Ought we to hear the comment, “He is hard-working,” or “He is over-working,” as if it were the exception and not the rule? Should not earnest work be so natural to our vocation as not to arrest attention and excite comment? *It is devotion to work that tells.* We are not ordained, set apart, called to the ministry, that we may be speculators in the money-market, luminaries in the world of letters,



antiquarians, gardeners, sportsmen, judges of horses and wines, authorities in games of chance and skill, good boon companions; but we are called to the ministry for a work as high as it is distinct: to be in season and out of season devoted, counting nothing dear to ourselves; to be free of access to our people, ready to sacrifice our own leisure, and forego our own fireside comfort; to be diligent in visiting the sick and the whole; to present a familiar face in our schools; our sermons not stale, or disguised under another text, but warm and hot from the anvil of thought; coming before our people, not thinking all the time we are preaching, "Will they detect an old sermon here?" but speaking to them fresh from our knees, and with words inspired by God the Holy Ghost. Oh, the difference *loving our work* makes! and how soon it is discovered, and yet perhaps too late for retreat, whether a man has taken holy orders from a wrong motive or a right motive; whether because a family living awaits him, or because he yearns to win souls to Christ; whether because he is a younger son, and nothing else seems open to him, or because, John Baptist-like, or Timothy-like, or Cecil-like, or Mackenzie-like, he has been raised up by God out of a family of sons and daughters to do the Lord's work, and, dedicated to the Lord in baptism, the Lord has accepted the parents' gift, and is using him in His service! It makes all the dif-



ference, and a difference that tells more and more every year. I do not doubt that there are cases to be met with of men forced into holy orders, persuaded against their inclinations, whose instinctive conviction of unfitness or disqualification has been wrongly overruled, who buckle themselves earnestly to their work, and feel that it is theirs to do, and whom a strong sense of duty keeps up to the mark. But it is, for all that, against the collar—it is contrary to the grain; it is not the effort of one who *loves* his work, and yet loves his Master more; to whom the Sunday ministrations are not a weariness, but a *delight*; who rejoices in every opportunity of speaking for his Master; who asks not How much *must* I do? but How much *may* I do? who feels that time is short, and opportunity hurrying by, and would “redeem the time”; who is happy in his schools, happy in his Bible-classes, happy with a healthy and sanctified joy in the consciousness that God is using him to the good of others. It is this devotedness which affects the whole ministerial life in all its details; as the sun in the heavens, it shines on hill and valley.

It tells on our *habits of life*. I have great faith in early rising. It tells on our methodical division of our day. We shall not think of appropriating any time to ourselves, if by a different application of it we may use it better. Cecil says, “The devil does not care how ministers be employed, so long as it is

not in their proper work." It tells upon our *reading*; varied as our reading may be, and ranging over many departments of knowledge, we convert our reading into theology, and so study that we may use our knowledge in our pulpit; for there is a great difference between foolish preaching and the foolishness of preaching. Ours should be a well-stored mind, and not an empty mind, if we are to command the attention of the educated classes, and not to starve the uneducated.

Devotedness will tell in our *pastoral visits*; keeping our ministry in view, we shall find not unfrequently that one pastoral visit, wisely and truly used, does more than many sermons. None are more surprised than the laity if a clergyman call, and there be nothing *distinct* in his visit from that of worldly friends. They with difficulty persuade themselves that it is the same man who spoke so feelingly and earnestly on Sunday. We should keep a note-book by us, and there record for our use the experience we gain by intercourse with the world. "Arguments," says Fuller, "are the pillars of sermons, illustrations are the stained-glass windows." There is no such material for sermons, next to God's own Word, as the book of the human heart. If pastoral visiting will fill a church, it is the experience of life we gain by pastoral visiting which gives life to our preaching; the hearer feels we are not dreaming, but thinking,

and there will be that ring in our utterances which will carry conviction home to the heart, because the human heart, with its aches and pains, its needs and longings, is everywhere much the same. It is very easy to detect in preaching whether a man be ventilating some favourite theory, or dealing with the facts and workings of our mysterious and chequered spiritual life.

Devotedness will tell in the very character of his *recreations* and *amusements*. He will make all these conscientiously subordinate to his calling. There may be many things as lawful to him as to others, but they are not expedient. There is no arguing about it. They are not expedient, and that ought to be enough for him. God never honours a compromising spirit. Every degree of love of the world is so much taken from love to God and the heart's allegiance to Him. What influence can a clergyman have who is seen in the hunting-field, or playing cards, or frequenting a theatre, or pirouetting in a ball-room? Would he desire to be summoned to the exercise of his sacred office from such incongruous scenes to one suddenly overtaken with death, or to minister in the sick room, or to speak words of peace to a soul trembling in prospect of eternity? I trow not. The esteem or friendship of the world may be gained, but it will be at the cost of the gravity and dignity of his office, and assuredly of his

own spirituality. We cannot afford to lower the tone of our life, nor do anything by which the mind parts with spirituality.

Devotedness will have to do with our *personal habits*, with the plainness and simplicity of our fare, and the avoidance of ostentation at home, even to the details of our dress. A soft, effeminate clergy, vying with the efforts of the wealthier classes, self-indulgent epicures, particular to a degree about their tables, and vain in their personal appearance,—this is different from a love of order and habits of neatness not to be despised or condemned. I knew of a clergyman who led the fashion in dress, and never sat down in the trousers in which he walked, lest the set at the knees should be spoiled! And what are we to say of those advertisements for curates and for curacies in which honest hard work, and a sphere in which a man may gain rich experience, is not the encouragement held out, but rather “light work,” “good society,” or “a pleasant neighbourhood,” is the bait to lure, or the condition looked for? Such advertisements reflect but little credit on those who insert them; they indicate a very low view of the Christian ministry. It is not *work* that hurts men: it is idleness that harms. Idleness is the fruitful source of countless temptations. And the men who have been, and are, the happiest and the healthiest are the men who do not count work drudgery.



For us it is to set before us our Master's example, Who spared not Himself for us; Who knew no confusion or impatience in His work, Who secured jealously His seasons of self-recollection and pauses for prayer, and Whose meat it was to do the will of God. His motto was, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" and those twelve hours found Him unresting and full of blessed toil. His motto was, "The night cometh, when no man can work;" and our night comes when the eye will be filled with darkness and the ear with dust. The standard of His ministry is the highest attainable: we can only set it before us as a copy and exemplar.

"As plants or vines that never saw the sun,  
But dream of him, and guess where he may be,  
And do their best to get to him."

The great thing for us is to be *real*. It is the decision of the *heart* that gives decision to the *life*. It is the devotion of the man who has felt the constraining love of Christ which gives the tone to all his work. Decision for God—that consecration of body, soul, and spirit to Christ's service, which follows on a true conversion, and true Spirit-taught perception of the Saviour's love—is the secret of perseverance in well-doing; it is the great safeguard against weariness or indolence, against any subtle thought of merit or of working for the sake of reward. Decision distinctly



for Him who has bought us with His precious blood will give the tone to our preaching; for it will prompt us to teach our people that we work *from* life, and not *for* life; that we do not work that we may be saved, but that we are saved that we may work. Decision for Him will characterize the outward life in the eyes of the discerning world. Decision for Him will be of strength to us in that self-denial which is daily and hourly put to the test and strain. And the thought of the responsibility of the minister, occasionally and thoughtfully realized, as during a retreat, or on the anniversary of our ordination, or on some Sabbath morning before we go forth to our public ministration, or before we go our round of pastoral visits, will surely bring us to our knees for ourselves, that Christ's strength may be made perfect in our weakness, that in all we do or say we may do all in the name of the Lord Jesus; that we may have a single eye to God's glory, and may be the honoured and privileged instruments in increasing the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. We shall be often praying for all needful grace and for an unction from above. We shall pray for ourselves, that after we have preached to others we ourselves be not cast away, that by our example we may not have given the enemies of the Lord occasion to blaspheme; and that by our devotion to our work we may magnify our office. We may faintly imagine what the reward

of faithful service will hereafter be, when we think of the joy we are now given to know when we have been allowed of God to help a soul out of darkness into light,—what the *crown* must be in heaven, if a happiness the world knows not of be our experience here. And so in the words of an old writer we close: “Commit the matter to God. Wait patiently; get a feeling of the compassion of Christ, and die praying, ‘Lord, pity Thy people.’”

“Give me the Priest these graces to possess :  
Of an Ambassador the just address,  
A Father’s tenderness, a Shepherd’s care ;  
A Leader’s courage, who the cross can bear ;  
A Ruler’s awfulness, a Watcher’s eye,  
A Pilot’s skill the helm in storms to ply ;  
A Fisher’s patience and a Labourer’s toil,  
A Guide’s dexterity to disembroil ;  
A Prophet’s inspiration from above,  
A Teacher’s knowledge and a Saviour’s love.  
Give me in Him a light upon a hill,  
Whose ray that whole circumference can fill.  
In God’s own Word and sacred learning versed,  
Deep in the study of the heart immersed ;  
Who in sick souls can the disease descry,  
And wisely fit restoratives apply ;  
To beautiful pastures lead his sheep,  
Watchful from hellish wolves his fold to keep.”

## The Results of the Ministry.

BY THE REVEREND EDWARD HOARE, M.A., HONORARY CANON  
OF CANTERBURY, AND VICAR OF HOLY TRINITY, TUN-  
BRIDGE WELLS, KENT.



## XX.

### *THE RESULTS OF THE MINISTRY.*

I N our study of the results of the ministry it must be clearly understood at the outset that we are not to be dependent on results for the motive power of our work. That must be a matter of principle, and it must be perfectly clear to our own mind that, whether or not we see results, the call of the Lord is the same; and it is that call from Him which has placed us, and daily maintains us, in our ministry. We send out missions, for example, not in consequence of the number of converts that have been saved from either Jews or Gentiles, but because we have the Lord's command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" and if there had never been a single convert, that command would remain the same.

But, though we are not to be dependent on visible result, we are most undoubtedly to look for it; and if we do not receive it, the want of it ought to occasion very great searchings of heart. There is no labour carried on in life without the expectation of



results. Is there a merchant in London who would go daily to his office if he did not expect to make a fortune, or, at all events, secure a maintenance? Is there a farmer in England who would continue to cultivate his land if he had no expectation of a crop? Is there a fisherman in the world who would persevere in his fishing if he knew perfectly well that there were no fish in the pond, or, at all events, that he had not the slightest hope of catching them? And is the work of a clergyman to be an exception to the universal rule? Is he to be the only merchant seeking goodly pearls, and never finding them?—the only husbandman sowing good seed, and never reaping a harvest?—the only unsuccessful fisherman, whose toil is never rewarded, and whose nets are never full? Is he, who above all other men has the special promise of the accompanying presence and power of the Lord Himself—is he to be the only workman who is to expect his labour, even though it be in the Lord, to be in vain? Christian faith, as well as common sense, agree in rejecting such an idea; and if there be any living man who may go forth to his labour day by day perfectly certain of his results, it is the man who is called by God, sent forth to the work of God, accompanied by the Spirit of God, entrusted with the ministration of the Word of God, and assured by God Himself that His word shall not return unto Him void. Surely such an one

stands out above all other men, encouraged by Divine authority to work on in joyful hope, with perfect confidence that God will give result.

Nor is this result to be either unseen or invisible. I know there are cases in which it pleases God in His own Divine wisdom to withhold from some of His most devoted servants the unspeakable joy of perceptible results; and I cannot forget those words written prophetically of our Lord's own work amongst the Jews—"I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." I know also that a large portion of the very best result is from its very nature invisible to the eye of any man. I am aware also that God may allow years to pass before the result is brought to the knowledge of the labourer; and I have myself had the joy of meeting with delightful instances of most sacred results, in which I have known nothing of the parties, and never so much as heard of their existence, till more than ten, twenty, and thirty years after they had been brought to God through my own ministry.

But bearing in mind all this, I still maintain that we are not to suppose that we are to be always working in the dark. The normal state of things is that we should look for fruit, and find it. I do not mean by this that we are to be always reaping and never sowing, but I do mean that we are not to be always sowing and never reaping. If we are sowing

good seed, and sowing it in the right way, it is both our privilege and duty to look out for the enjoyment of the harvest ; and I think we must also come to the converse conclusion, that if there be no harvest, and the seed show no sign of growth, there is serious matter for the gravest anxiety. Possibly the seed may not be pure ; possibly our mode of cultivation may be defective ; or possibly it may not be watered by the life-giving showers of the Spirit of God. In any case, there is grave reason for most searching inquiry as to our motives and our work.

What, then, are the practical results that we ought to expect ? and what should we do towards their development ? Let these be the subjects of our present study.

In considering the results, we must remember at the outset that these results are of a very varied character. There is an infinite variety in the instruments which God is employing, and in the material on which they are employed. The razor, and the axe of the woodman, may both be made of the best tempered steel, but they are used for totally different purposes, and they produce totally different results. So in the ministry, the refined and thoughtful scholar, who is wounded in spirit by anything that grates on his cultivated taste, may be a different being to the fluent and ready evangelist, who goes straight at his mark, and never thinks about the mode in which

truth is delivered, if only it be carried home to the souls of men with power. Thus, though both are true men, and true servants of the Lord, it is not likely that the same results will follow from their ministry.

So again, there is as great a variety in the material on which we are called to work. There are country villages and large towns, small congregations in which everybody knows everybody, and large congregations in which multitudes know nobody. There are intelligent and highly educated gentlemen who are accustomed to form their opinions from books, and ill-educated people who depend almost exclusively on oral teaching. And all these varieties of character must produce variety in the form of the results. Suppose that the same truths are preached, and people brought to the same blessed Saviour through the teaching of the same Holy Spirit, the work will show itself in different forms in different characters. All will be saved in the same great salvation, all transformed into the likeness of the same Saviour; but they will not be moulded in the same mould, and the results will not be uniform. Of course some forms of result are much more frequently met with than others. Amongst the most common are the five following :—

*1. Influence.*

We all know too well the fatal influence of an



inconsistent ministry, and the deadening influence of an idle one. But I am not speaking of that, but rather of the influence of good men. I fear we must admit that there are many who are very poor preachers, although they are good men. They are not what the poor sometimes call "good churchmen." They throw no life into the liturgy, and their ministrations are sometimes so dull and lifeless, that if God did not take the text, and preach patience, as Herbert says, it is difficult to understand how the people could ever be kept together. In such cases it is almost impossible to look for any deep impression on the souls of the people. The man in most cases never tries for it, and in many scarcely desires it. I remember one of that type saying to me that he should not like it at all if any one were to come to him in anxiety about his soul; and you may be perfectly sure that when he felt that, he did not do much to awaken the sleepers. Now, such a ministry as that must be regarded as the lowest type of a good man's ministry. There is really nothing done to awaken sinners, or to lead on the people of God. But I cannot say even of it that there is no result. Many of those men are humble, pious, and consistent men. They preach by their consistency a great deal better than they do in their sermons, and by the felt power of Christian influence they frequently give a tone to the mind of a parish. They uphold



the standard of right and wrong ; they are witnesses for God, and they are known to be so throughout the villages in which they live ; so that, being scattered up and down throughout the land, through the blessed instrumentality of a national Church they produce, in their measure, their result on the general tone of society.

## *2. Organization.*

There are some persons who have a marvellous power of organization. They are always making plans, and often carrying them out with great efficiency. Their parochial apparatus is complete. Their churches are restored, and their services are in excellent order ; their schools are well conducted ; and there are clubs of all kinds in their parish—provident clubs, coal clubs, young men's clubs—in fact, a club for anything ; and you cannot watch the process without observing the great efficiency with which the whole machinery is conducted. Now, in such cases there is beyond doubt a result, the result of a complete apparatus, the result that above all others will attract the attention of the world. But does it follow that souls are saved ? May not such persons sometimes have too much reason to say at the end of their work, "*Multum agendo nihil feci*" ? Is it not just possible that the strength is being put into the machinery instead of into the work itself, and that the warning of the prophet is forgotten—

“They sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag”? They are like persons who keep their boats and nets in excellent order, but not like fishermen with their boat sinking or their net breaking through the multitude of fish. They are for ever painting their boats and rearranging their sails. They have everything ready to catch every kind of fish; but they never launch out into the deep, and the result is that they are not fishers of men. Their plans are first rate, but where are the souls? It is the good Christian, and not the good plan, that is the real result of the ministry of God.

### 3. *Instruction.*

It is one of the tendencies of the day to exalt impression above instruction, and there are multitudes who care much more for a sermon that will make them feel, than for one that will make them think, or that will leave any solid truth on their understanding. Now, let it not be supposed for one moment that I undervalue impressive preaching, for there is something inexpressibly melancholy in a cold, dry, didactic statement of those glorious truths that ought to fill the whole soul with overflowing emotion. What I contend for is, that impression and instruction ought to go together, and that a result of immense importance is attained, if good, solid, scriptural truth is driven as a nail in a sure place into the understandings of those that hear us,

and if we send forth, either through our schools and Bible-classes, our theological lectures or our sermons, a body of persons well instructed in the truth of God. Such a result may never be known to the preacher, and is perfectly certain never to be alluded to in the pages of any revivalist newspaper ; but it is lasting, influential, and of unspeakable usefulness in the Church of God. I remember well that before I went to college I heard my dear friend, and at that time my tutor, the late Rev. Henry Venn Elliott, preach a sermon on the justification of Abraham. The framework of that sermon, and the appeals made in it, have long since passed away from my memory, but the solid instruction then conveyed has remained with me through life. It has helped to form the character of my whole ministry, and I have myself passed it on to hundreds of others, and know many clergymen who are now preaching it, having learned it from me, as I originally learned it from him. But he never knew till twenty-five years after he preached the sermon how deep his teaching had sunk into the understanding of his pupil. We must never therefore undervalue instruction. We must thank God for those who are "apt to teach," and who are called by His Spirit in our schools and various institutions to teach good, sound, scriptural theology ; and if in our ordinary ministry we are permitted to make a permanent lodgment of Divine truth on the mind,

we have to be most deeply thankful for the result of our work. I remember hearing one clergyman say of another, "I never hear him preach without gaining a fresh light on some passage of Scripture." No man could pay another a higher compliment; and the result of such teaching is the formation of a body of persons who form the mainstay of the Church of Christ,—persons who know the truth, and love it; who can discern between truth and error; who know what they believe, and why they believe it; and who thus mix in society as the faithful, steady, unwavering witnesses for Christ.

#### 4. *Edification.*

This is another result that can never be brought to any numerical test, but one that has the highest sanction of the Word of God. We are given as ministers "for the edifying of the body of Christ," and we are especially directed to "feed the Church of God, which He has purchased by His own blood." It is perfectly clear, that if the body of Christ is edified, and the Church of God is fed, one result for which God has appointed us is attained. The people of God do not want to be always being converted, and the results of the ministry must not be always brought to the test of converting power. If faith is strengthened, if mourners are comforted, if the careworn are enabled to cast their burdens on the Lord, if Christians are incited to lead holy lives, if



the love of the Lord Jesus is more and more shed abroad in the hearts of the people, if the spirit of prayer and thanksgiving increases, if zeal for the Lord's service abounds, so that a hearty missionary spirit grows up in a parish, and if dying persons are helped and upheld through the valley of the shadow of death, with the everlasting arms underneath and their blessed Lord and Saviour with them every moment through the conflict,—I say, if God does all this, shall any man say there is no result? These are results of the highest possible character—results that tend to raise our own souls by bringing us into the great realities of the life of faith—results so sacred and so holy, that those who know only the surface of things can scarcely look for them—results that require in the minister himself a personal and intimate acquaintance with the Lord.

In some respects these results may be considered the highest of any, for they are the most elevating, and are most concerned with the sacred intimacy of the soul with God. Any priest under the Levitical law might minister in the outer tabernacle, but the high priest alone could go into the holy of holies; but now that the veil is rent in twain from the top to the bottom, the holy of holies is thrown open to us all; and what can be a higher result than to be permitted to take some dear child of God by the



hand, and by the power of the Holy Ghost so lead him in to the mercy-seat, that he may there remain face to face with the Lord Jesus, and there rest in the companionship of God? Of course there is nothing in such a result that can be registered in a tabulated form, but there may be a reality about it that can never be mistaken; and if God has been pleased in His boundless mercy to make use of us for its attainment, we may not have the same gifts which we see in others, but we have enough to fill our hearts with joy, and to send us forth in our work full of thanksgiving, full of trust, and full of hope.

#### 5. *Conversion.*

And now I come to the last, or, as it might be considered, the first great result of the ministry—viz., the conversion of sinners; a result which, according to the teaching of our blessed Saviour, occasions an increase even to the joys of heaven. This work of conversion will, of course, vary in form with the endless varieties of circumstance and character. But there are two great groups which appear to comprehend most cases.

First, there is the conversion of those who have the form of Christianity without any experience of its power; in other words, the conversion of church-goers. I am well aware that such a statement may startle some; but to the students of Scripture there

should be nothing strange in it, for our Lord Himself applies to those who heard Him the words of the prophet—"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;" and surely if the heart is far from God, they need conversion. Nor are we to suppose that those words described merely a Jewish difficulty; for it is one of the predicted dangers of the latter days, that there shall be people "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." To what extent such characters abound in our churches none of us know; but when we remember how many there are who are kept by their own conscience from attendance at the table of the Lord—how many secondary motives there are to induce a person to go to church with sufficient regularity to maintain his respectability—how many are present at church from habit, how many from education, how many from the simple effects of tradition—how many, to use their own expression, who make no profession, and how many who are living in the world, and for the world, as entirely as if there were nothing but the world to absorb their thought,—it is altogether impossible to deny the overwhelming need of converting power even amongst those who have the form of godliness. Here, then, is one of the most blessed results of the ministry. I can imagine nothing more delightful

than to witness the transition from a state of hard, cold, lifeless form, to one of tenderness of heart and of warm and living faith. It is just like the change described in Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones. When bone had come to bone, and the skin had covered them, there was the complete form of the renovated man, but there was no life in them. They had the form of the perfect man, but not the life. But when the prophet prophesied to the wind, "the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." This is exactly the result that is taking place now to an incalculable extent. Nothing is more common than for persons to come to church cold, careless, and dead, with a Christianity that has consisted in nothing but externals, and never reached the secret springs of the soul, and to find through the sermon such a blessing to their souls that all things become new. There is a new understanding, a new faith, a new love, a new joy, and a new life for the remainder of their days. It is obvious that such results as these cannot be brought to any numerical standard, for they do not involve any one outward act. The people have been baptized, confirmed, and in many cases have already been communicants. There is no definite ecclesiastical act to mark the change. It is a change of spirit, not of form. It is not the creation of a new

fabric, but the commencement of life in that which is already there. It is therefore utterly beyond all human calculation; and the idea of counting up conversions after a sermon or after a mission suggests the question whether those who do so really know what conversion means. We may count the number of baptisms, or the number of communicants; but who can count God's hidden ones? and who can reduce to a statistical table the secret action of the Holy Ghost on the soul?

But there is another large class of conversions in which there is a much greater power of observation. I mean the conversion of the openly ungodly. There are thousands and tens of thousands all around us who make no profession of religion. They are living without God in the world, as much as if they were in the heart of Africa. Some are professed infidels; but the majority do not think enough about it to adopt even a system of infidelity. They are living in what Charnock calls "practical atheism." In works they deny Him, if not in words. It is amongst such classes that we carry on what may be termed our missionary ministry. We must never forget the appalling fact, that while we are happily ministering amongst our large congregations in church, there are multitudes outside, and all around our own doors, who never bow the knee to God at home, and who never set their foot within His house.



Now, there cannot be a doubt that multitudes of such persons are being brought, in various places and various ways, one by one, to the great salvation; and it is impossible to imagine a more glorious result of the ministry. A young curate, visiting from house to house, meets with a stubborn fellow, who tells him plainly that he believes in nothing. Within a twelve-month that curate has the joy of seeing that same man a devout communicant, a consistent believer, an active helper in every effort to spread the gospel in the parish. Is not that a result? a result to bring joy in heaven—a result to fill the heart of that young curate with joy, and to send him on his way abounding with thankfulness and hope? Now, such results as these are conspicuous. If the drunkard become sober, if the practical atheist become the habitual worshipper, if the avowed opponent become the loving friend, or if the man living in open ungodliness become the devout communicant, there is something done that we can see, and the change is of such a character that, if it cannot be seen, we must conclude that it is not there. If the ungodly man be still ungodly, or the drunkard still living in drunkenness, we cannot fall back for our comfort on the idea that we do not always see what is going on; for we do see the absence of result, and the unchanged character of the man is a conspicuous fact that it is perfectly impossible to deny. The change, when it



takes place, is immediately brought to the test of certain definite acts ; and when those tests are there, we may thank God for the great encouragement, and labour harder than ever, encouraged by the result which He has given. But when those tests are not there, we cannot comfort our hearts by the hope that there may be an unseen work in progress. In Elijah's time there were seven thousand of God's hidden ones, but they were all distinguished by the outward fact that none bowed the knee to Baal.

Such, then, are some of the results which God is most undoubtedly producing through the ministry. I do not pretend to say that they are all, or nearly so. Many will probably think of others which have been permitted to follow their own ministry, to which I have not alluded. My desire has been, not so much to exhaust the subject, as to maintain the principle that, as ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is both our privilege and duty to look for great results.

I wish to hand down to others in this paper the lesson I learned in my first curacy. I was ordained to the charge of a fishing village in Suffolk, where my rector, the Rev. Francis Cunningham, to whom I owe more than I have any words to express, had been labouring for more than twenty years. That village, when he took the charge of it, had been utterly neglected. The people were a set of rough

wreckers, and, if tradition were true, the previous rector himself had not been altogether indifferent to the spoil. But when I was ordained as curate to Mr. Cunningham, and went about from house to house as he directed me, I found there in the different cottages throughout the village a large body of persons who were, beyond all possibility of contradiction, the result of my rector's ministry. The whole tone of the village was changed; and though there were still there those who looked back with regret to former times, there could not be the slightest doubt as to the fact that there were numbers of persons, both old and young, truly converted to God, and, as converted persons, adorning the gospel of their Saviour. It is said of Barnabas, that when he went to Antioch "he saw the grace of God." So when I went to that village, I could see the great work that had been wrought. As I went from house to house, I could see the difference between the two classes of characters. I saw there brave men who in their efforts to save life feared no storm, in childlike faith fearing God. I saw there devoted women adorning the gospel by their consistent lives. I saw well-ordered households, so beautiful in their cleanliness, and so fragrant with Christian happiness, that the effect on my own mind, when I went amongst them as a beginner, was to lead me to exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" And yet there was nothing

very remarkable in the Rector's talents. He was not distinguished as a preacher, or as a person of brilliant ability. But he was a true and faithful pastor, and he had a true and faithful wife, and I saw the result of their work. I cannot tell you how it was brought about. Probably some were brought to God through the wife, and some through the husband ; some through the school, some through the pastoral visiting, some through the cottage lecture, and some through the preaching in church. It all took place before my time, and was the result of a steady work continued for more than twenty years, so that I did not see the process. All I know is that the result was there. The means may have been various, and interlaced one with another, so as to render it quite impossible to say how much was owing to each instrumentality. But there could not be a doubt about the result. That was conspicuous, and no one who knew the people could mistake it.

Nor was it merely the result of a passing excitement or personal influence, like the religion of Joash, which came to an end as soon as Jehoiada died. We all know the effect of time—how it thins our ranks and how it tests our principles. We know what forty-five years can do amongst a people. But it is forty-five years since my rector gave up the personal care of that parish, forty-two years since I went to

it as curate. Now, I went this last autumn to pay a visit to that village. I went about amongst the old cottages, and there I found, after all these years, several of those dear people still surviving, and still standing fast in the Lord. Rector after rector had come and gone; but the rock on which they were built was immovable, and there I saw them abiding on the rock, unchanged and I believe unchangeable, because by God's grace they are preserved in Jesus Christ.

But why do I mention this instance? Not because I believe it to be a special case, or anything exceptional, for I could tell of numberless other parishes in which similar results have followed the ministry. I have mentioned it because it is my own fixed conviction that there was nothing exceptional about it, and that we ought all to be looking for similar results. I do not mean that every person is to look for results in the same form; for, as I have already said, there must be varieties in the form of the work. There are some working amongst the delicate flowers of the garden, and some sowing corn in the ploughed field. So there are both sowers and reapers, some especially employed at the commencement, and some in the full development of the work effected. I fully admit all these varieties. But my point is, that, as we are doing the Lord's work, we have just as much right as my dear rector had to look for



an equal result. God has said, "My word shall not return unto me void," and that promise relates to the word itself, without reference to any personal distinction. We may therefore go on our way full of hope, in the confident assurance that, whatever be our own particular department, we shall be employed by God Himself in bringing about the sacred, happy, most blessed result of a people made ready prepared for the Lord.

But if such results are to be expected, and if the hope of them is clearly held out to us in Scripture, may I venture to make four suggestions with reference to their attainment?

I. We must pray for it. Pray not merely for help in our work, and for Divine guidance in all we do, but definitely for result. The result that I have endeavoured to describe is the act of a supernatural power making use of natural instrumentality. The agent employed is a natural agent, a common man, just like his fellows; and the instrument employed is a natural instrument—viz., man's power of persuasion and instruction; but the power that produces the result is a supernatural power—viz., the power of the Holy Ghost working in the soul. When St. Paul reported the results of his first missionary journey, he did not relate what he had done, or even what the Lord had done by them, but what God had done *with* them (*μετ' αὐτῶν*). He and Barnabas



were labouring as God's servants, and God was with them as their companion, producing result. So when we are working to the best of our power, it is our privilege to be pleading with Him, as a companion present with us, to work with us, and produce result.

2. We must work for it.

I remember a remark by Bishop Perry, in, I think, his first charge in Melbourne, that in many sermons the preachers appear to have no definite object before them, and not to be aiming at any definite result. And certainly, if the preacher has a result in view, it is sometimes very difficult for the hearer to discover what it is. Some people seem as if they sat down to prepare a sermon without being able to look beyond the difficulty of completing it. They begin before they know what they are going to say, and the one result at which they aim is a manuscript of a certain length. Others will aim higher: some at producing something that will be popular, some at that which will be interesting, and some at that which will be beautiful as a composition; and they may all have their reward. But if we are looking and praying for the true result of the ministry—the salvation of souls—we must aim straight at it. We must not “fight as those who are beating the air,” but we must settle thoroughly in our own mind what is the result that we desire to see accomplished;

and then, forgetting all besides, must keep the result steadily in view, and endeavour so to speak and so to act, that God, working with us, may be pleased to bestow it. It is a good thing to make it a rule when preparing a sermon to ask ourselves the question, What result do we expect to be produced through it? If that question were always asked, it would tend to sharpen a good many arrows that now appear to have no point.

3. We must prepare for it.

I once met with a remarkable man who had been a great traveller, and had paid careful attention to the preaching of the gospel in different parts of the world; and I asked him what he thought of the preaching of the gospel in the Church of England. His answer was very remarkable, and, as I thought, most instructive. He said he had met with no class of men who, on the whole, threw the net so well as the clergymen of the Church of England, but he knew of none who drew it in so badly. Surely there was truth in what he said; for we have no system in the Church of England for the ingathering of the results. It really seems sometimes as if we did not expect them, for we certainly make no preparation for them. If, for instance, a person is awakened to a deep sense of sin, and is troubled at heart by the question "What must I do to be saved?" what do we do for him? Popery presses

him to the confessional; the Wesleyan has a class-meeting ready for him; the Primitive Methodist will urge him to the bench for the anxious; but we Churchmen are far too apt to leave him to wander about alone, unhelped and un comforted, till he either wanders from our fold in quest of help which we fail to provide, or sinks back into a state of insensibility. Arnold said, in writing to Mr. Tucker, that he believed it was of the utmost importance that there should be a nucleus provided in every mission, to which converts might be attached like the snow to the snowball; and the same is true of our parishes. If we expect results, we must be prepared to gather them; if we expect to hook the fish, we must have our landing-net ready; and if we expect an abundant harvest, we must not leave it to litter about in the field, but must be prepared with the garner in which the grain may be kept in safety. It is my own conviction that thousands are lost to the Church of England through the neglect of this principle. We pray for results, we work for results, we have results given us by God; and then after all, when God has given them, we neglect to gather them, and, as far as we are concerned, they are lost.

4. We must give thanks for what the Lord has done.

It is the thankful spirit that is winsome to others,

as it is the thankful spirit that glorifies God. If, therefore, we desire to be efficient winners of souls, and really to bring glory to God, we must not be afraid of recognizing the blessing which He has given, and of giving thanks for the results which He has bestowed. It has been said of congregations, that a crowd draws a crowd, and the same may be said of results. Results produce results; and the thankful happiness of a body of persons who are praising God for what He has done, is one of the most attractive instrumentalities that can be brought to bear on those who have not yet known the Lord. No one cares to be associated with those who are downcast, disheartened, and for ever complaining that there is nothing done. It is when we are able to see His hand working with us, and to say, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad," that we begin to look for still greater things to come. Thus expectation grows with the sense of thanksgiving; and, coming before God with a thankful heart, we realize the truth of the promise, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

I may conclude with a slight expansion of a sentence which used to be hung up in the vestry of that revered rector to whom I have already alluded: "Pray for great things; work for great

things ; prepare for great things ; but give thanks for what may seem small things, for they may be great when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and they are the results of the great grace of a forgiving and forbearing God."

FINIS.



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